WILLIAM SHAKSPERE AND ROBERT GREENE

THE EVIDENCE

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WILLIAM SHAKSPERE *and* ROBERT GREENE

THE EVIDENCE

By

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To the Memory of
My Mother

PREFACE.

THE design of this work is to give some account of the conspicuous events and of some of the personages connected with the literary history of England in that wonderful Renaissance which took place in the Elizabethan age. All that the writer has attempted is a concise narrative of some of the facts, grouping them together in a compact form, with such reflections as seemed to him to be just and appropriate. To secure this end he has labored to strip from Shakspere's biography the manufactured traditions which date from a considerable period after Shakspere's death. Where all is conjecture let the reader do his own guessing and strive for the abatement of that new Freak called Esthetic Criticism with which some of our critics and commentators designate their own absurdities.

The writer has given unusual prominence to several distinguished personages amongst Shakspere's contemporaries, notably Robert Greene, William Kemp and

Ben Jonson. The work is sketchy in execution because the materials do not exist for more than an outline figure.

The readers familiar with the old English dramatic poets do not believe in an exclusive authorship, or uniform workmanship, of the greatest of the Elizabethan English works. While they set up no claimant for the writings so commonly credited to William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon, they believe, nevertheless, that the Stratfordian canon is open to demurrer.

Conspicuous among modern and recent writers on the subject of Robert Greene, who show the courage of their convictions by their valiant strokes in defense of that poet's reputation, are Professor J. M. Brown of New Zealand, Dr. A. B. Grossart, and Professor Storojenko. The citations borrowed from their works attest the writer's obligation to them, and are sufficiently indicated in the text.

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I

This book was written primarily for private satisfaction, the author having no desire for approbation, and to disclose merely the true William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon; to find him as a man; to feel his personal presence; to know him as he was known by his neighbors as land-owner, money lender, captain of amusements, actor, play-broker and litigant. From dusty records that do not awaken a deific impulse may be read the true story of his life, but, before directing the readers' attention to the documentary evidence, which can be entirely depended upon in regard to himself, his family, neighbors, fellow-actors and associates,

we desire to cut out the worthless conjectures which are contained in most, if not all, of the recent works on the subject of Shakespeare. Circumstances, however slight, may give rise to idle conjectures, but their worthlessness may be best discerned by setting up against them reasonable ones. To repeat apocryphal anecdotes and manufactured traditions that are not reasonable inferences from concurrent events is to dissipate mental energy; antiquity *per se* adds nothing to confirmation or probability. In that digest of biography, so often quoted, George Stevens tells his readers in less than fifty words all he knew with any degree of certainty concerning Shakspere, with the exception of his conjectures as to the authorship of the poems and plays. This great Shaksperean commentator indulges in no aesthetic dreams or whimsical conjectures which taint the credibility of his successors by their statement of them as proven facts.

Of all kinds of literature, biography

extends the most generous hospitality. Its subjects live an after life in affiliation with the readers without regard to condition. In seeking to renew the enthusiasm of our youth for this species of writing we visit the public library and find many changes in biographical history, such as the elimination of spurious tradition and fanciful conjecture. For instance, instead of the traditional life of Washington, there is a life of the true Washington; and, instead of a caricatured life of Cromwell, there is a record of the duly attested facts of the many-sided and wondrous Cromwell. With what astonishment we survey the huge issue of books on Shakspere which stand conspicuous on the shelves! There are more than ten thousand books and pamphlets—many of them of the memoir order—almost every one of which has a biographical preface: but we find that most, if not all, the biographers of Shakspere still lead the reader into the shadow of chaotic conjecture and might-have-been, and that

Shaksperean literature still lacks a book on the personal life of William Shakspere that shall be to most, if not all others, a pruning hook cutting out the reveries and guess work which unfortunately have seduced the historian and misled the reader. We hold in our hand one of the more recent of these books of fictitious biography, transmissive "fraud of the imagination" which authenticates nothing!

As co-readers, we will now focus our attention and thoughts intently upon the celebrated letter written by the dying hand of Robert Greene, and addressed to three brother poets to whom he administers a gentle reproof on account of their by-gone and present faults, of which, play-writing was most to be shunned. This remarkable letter reveals Robert Greene as the most tragical figure of his time—a sad witness of his ultimate penitence and absolute confession, a character of pathetic sincerity, weirdness and charnel-like gloom that chills the soul. This let-

ter, so often referred to, and seemingly so little understood, is one of the most extraordinary pieces of writing in our literary annals. It has all the credibility that a dying statement can give, but it also evidences the fact that Robert Greene had previously drawn the fire of the improvising actors "who wrought the disfigurement of the poet's work." There is one in particular at whom he hurls a dart and hits the mark.

"Yes, trust them not; for there is an "upstart crow, beautified with our (po-"et's) feathers, that, with his Tyger's "heart wrapt in a Player's hide, supposes "he is as well able to bombast out a "blanke verse as the best of you; and be-"ing an absolute 'Johannes Factotum,' is "in his own conceit, the onely Shake-"scene in a countrie."

This sorrow-stricken man wrote these words of censure with the utmost sincerity. Earlier biographers made no attempt to read Shakspere into these lines of reproof, but those only of later times regard

the allusion invaluable as being the first literary notice of Shakspere, and find pleasure in reading into Shakspere's life the fact of his having been satirized in 1592 under the name "Shake-scene," used by Greene contumeliously.

The letter is contained in a little work entitled "Greene's Groats Worth of Wit," "Bought with a Million of Repentance, originally published in 1592, having been entered at Stationers Hall on the 20th of September in that year." "To those Gentlemen his Quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making Plaies."

"With thee (Marlowe) will I first be-
"gin, thou famous gracer of tragedians,
"that Greene, who hath said with thee,
"like the foole in his heart, there is no
"God, should now give glorie unto His
"greatnesse; for penetrating is His
"power, His hand lies heavy upon me, He
"hath spoken unto me with a voice of
"thunder and I have felt He is a God that
"can punish enemies. Why should thy

"excellent wit, His gift, be so blinded that "thou shouldst give no glory to the "giver?" . . . .

"With thee I joyne young Juvenall, "(Nash) that byting satyrist that lastlie "with mee together writ a comedie. "Sweete boy, might I advise thee, be ad- "vised, and get not many enimies by bit- "ter words . . . . Blame not schol- "lers vexed with sharp lines, if they re- "prove thy too much libertie of reproofe."

"And thou (Peele) no less deserving "than the other two, in some things rarer, "in nothing inferiour; driven (as my- "selfe) to extreame shifts; a little have "I to say to thee; and were it not an idol- "atrous oath, I would swear by sweet S. "George thou are unworthie better hap, "sith thou dependest on so meane a stay. "(theatre) Base minded men all three of "you, if by my miserie ye be not warned; "for unto none of you, like me, sought "those burrs to cleave; those puppits, I "meane, that speake from our mouths, "those anticks garnisht in our colours. Is

"it not strange that I, to whom they all "have been beholding, is it not like that "you to whom they all have beene behold- "ing, shall, were ye in that case that I am "now, be both at once of them forsaken? "Yes, trust them not; for there is an up- "start crow, beautified with our feathers, "that, with his Tyger's heart wrapt in a "Player's hide, supposes he is as well able "to bombast out a blanke verse as the best "of you; and being an absolute 'Johannes "Factotum,' is in his own conceit the "onely Shake-scene in a countrie." . . .

"But now returne I againe to you "three, knowing my miserie is to you no "news; and let me heartily entreate you to "be warned by my harmes . . . . For "it is a pittie men of such rare wits "should be subject to the pleasures of such rude groomes."

Those biographers and critics who have written concerning Shakspere and Greene misapprehensively compound an integrate letter and pamphlet. It should be made clear that Greene's letter to his fel-

low poets is not an integral part of "Groats Worth of Wit," though appended towards the end of this pamphlet. The letter is strikingly personal and impressive, not a continuance of a pamphlet describing the folly of youth, but a mere appendage not properly constituting a portion of it. It was the classical commentator, Thomas Tyrwhitt (1730-85), we believe, who first made current the groundless opinion that purports to identify Shakspere as the one pointed at, but most, if not all, recent biographers and commentators state as a "proven fact" that Robert Greene was the first to bail Shakspere out of obscurity by the "reprehensive reference" to an "upstart crow."

The effect of conjectural reading is to raise a tempest of depreciation by which Shakspere's biographers and commentators have succeeded in handing down to posterity Greene's reputation as a preposterous combination of infamy and envy, harping with fiendish delight on the

irregularities and defects of Robert Greene's private life, which were not even shadowed in his writings. The writings of Greene "whose pen was pure" are exceptionally clean. Why then this unmerited abuse so malignant in disposition and passion? We answer that it is because the biographers of Shakspere have been seduced from truth by a vagrant conjecture into the belief that William Shakspere was the object and recipient of Greene's censure. It is apparent that the statement which affirms this is false, and we shall endeavor to show that Robert Greene's detractors are on the wrong trail.

II

There now arises the crucial enquiry concerning the charge that William Shakspere was thus lampooned in 1592 by Robert Greene in his celebrated address "To those Gentlemen of his own "fellowship that spend their wits making "plaies"—inferentially, Marlowe, Nash and Peele. The exigency of the case demands, in the opinion of Shakspere's modern biographers, the appropriation of Greene's reproachful reference to Shakspere, (though no name is mentioned) yet the actor referred to by Greene the children in London streets well knew and acclaimed; and every student of Elizabethan literature, history and bibliography, should know that the reference is identifiable with William Kemp, the celebrated comic actor, jig-dancer, and jester, who was, in his own conceit, the "only Shake-scene (dance-"scene) in a country," "Shake-scene"

and (dance-scene) being interchangeable compounds in the old meaning; but the votaries of Shakspere, posing as his biographers, in the urgency of their desire to remove doubts which had existed respecting the beginning of Shakspere's early literary productivity as play-maker, or as an elaborator of the works of other men, prior to the year 1592, crave some notation of literary activity in the young man who went up from Stratford to London in 1587 (probably).

As the immortal plays were coming out anonymously and surreptitiously, there is a very strong desire to appropriate or embezzle "the only Shake-scene" reference, for, in the similarity and sound of the compound word "Shake-scene" in one of its elements there is that which fits it to receive a Shakespearean connotation, thus catching the popular fancy of Shakespere's biographers and academic commentators. The compound word "Shake-scene" is made by the joining of two words generic in both its elements, and, in

combination having generic characteristics pertaining to a large or comprehensive class—that is to say, the words "shake" and "scene" bear a sense in which they are descriptive of all the various things to which they are applied, and of all other things that share their common properties. The fanciful biographers of William Shakspere rely on these words of reproof and censure as being the initial notice of his worth and work which was to lift him from his place of obscurity in the year 1592. The meaning of Greene's words in the idiom of the times, as in their contextural and natural sense, yield nothing which is confirmatory of such contention; for "dance" is connoted under the term "shake," answering to the first element in "Shake-scene," which in the old meaning meant "dance," generic for quick action; and "scene" meant "stage" instead of "scenery" as in the modern meaning, for the theatres were then in a state of absolute nudity—in other words, "Shake-scene" meant a

dancing performance upon the stage. In the plain unobtrusive language of our day, as well as in Elizabethan English, the word "shake"—the first element in "Shake-scene" is interchangeable with "dance," and, when given a specialized meaning with a view to theatrical matters in the year 1592, with Kemp and Shakspere claimants for Greene's reproof, who could doubt that the name which was so loudly acclaimed is identifiable with the spectacular luminary of the times, William Kemp? In setting up the comic actor and jig-dancer as claimant for Greene's objurgation, we promise the reader attestative satisfaction by establishing the truth of our contention by particular passages in "the address" when explained by the context as transcriptive of Kemp's actual history.

We now direct the attention of the reader specifically to the arrogant and boastful comedian, William Kemp. This man, according to Robert Greene's view, was the personification of everything

detestable in the actor—whose profession he despised. We think the biographers and commentators have mistaken the spectacularity of William Kemp for the rising sun of William Shakspere. In the closing years of the sixteenth, and the early years of the seventeenth, century there lived in London the most spectacular comic actor and clown of his day, the greatest "Shake-scene" or (dance-scene) of his generation, William Kemp, the worthy successor of Dick Tarlton. He had a continental reputation in 1589. This year also Nash dedicated to Kemp one of his attacks upon Martin Marprelate entitled "An Almond for a Parrot." "There is ample contemporary evidence "that Kemp was the greatest comic actor "of his time in England, and his noto- "riety as a morris-dancer was so great "that his journeyings were called dances. "He was the court favorite famous for "his improvisions, and loved by the pub- "lic," but hated by academic play-writers and ridiculed by ballad-makers. Kemp,

in giving his first pamphlet "The Nine "Days Wonder" to the press in 1599, turned upon his enemies and in retaliation called them "Shake-rags," which he used derisively and as contumeliously as Greene had used "Shake-scene." The use of the word "Shake-rags" by Kemp in his first and only published work is *prima-facie* evidence, that he also made use of the same term, orally and in his usual acrimonious manner, either against Greene, or those of his fellowship. The first element in the compound words "Shake-scene" and "Shake-rags" is governed by the same general law of movement or rhythmic action exemplified in dancing and rhymery. In 1640 Richard Brown in his "Antipodes" refers to the practice of jesters, in the days of Tarlton and Kemp, of introducing their own wit into poet's plays, Kemp, writing in 1600, asserts that he spent his life in mad jigs and merry jests, although he was entrusted with many leading parts in farce or broad comedy. His dancing of jigs at

the close of a play gave him his chief popularity ("Camden Society Papers"). "The jigs were performed to musical ac-"companiment and included the singing "of comic words. One or two actors at "times supported Kemp in his entertain-"ment, dancing and singing with him. "Some examples of the music to which "Kemp danced are preserved in a manu-"script collection of John Dowland now "in the library of Cambridge University. "The words were, doubtless, often impro-"vised at the moment, but, on occasions, "they were written out and published. "The Stationers Register contains licen-"ses for the publication of at least four "sets of words for the jigs in which "Kemp was the chief performer."

According to Henslowe's Diary, William Kemp was on June 15, 1592, a member of the company of the Lord Strange players under Henslowe and Alleyn, playing a principal comic part in the "Knack to Know a Knave," and introducing into it what is called on the title

page his "Applauded Merriments," a technical term for a piece of theatrical buffoonery. In 1593 Nash warned Gabriel Harvey "lest William Kemp should make merriment of him." "As early as 1586, "Kemp was a member of a company of "great importance which had arrived at "Elsinore where the king held court. He "remained two months in Denmark, and "received a larger amount of board "money than his fellow actors. In a let-"ter of Sir Phillip Sidney, dated Utrecht "March 24, 1586, he says, 'I sent you a "letter by Will (Kemp), my Lord Leices-"ter's jesting player.' It was after his "return from these foreign expeditions "that we find Kemp uniting his exertions "with those of Alleyn at the Rose and "Fortune theatres, as Prince Henry's "servants. During this whole period "from his return in 1586 from Denmark, "to the year 1598, he did not stay unin-"terruptedly at the theatres of the Bur-"bages. From February 19, to June 22, "1592, a part of Lord Leicester's com-

"pany played under Henslowe and Al-
"leyn. In 1602 Kemp was again in Lon-
"don, acting under Henslowe and Alleyn
"as one of the Earl of Worcester's men.
"We gather from Henslowe's Diary that
"on March 10th, he borrowed in ready
"money twenty shillings.

"Kemp was a very popular performer
"as early as 1589. We shall see hereafter
"that he, following the example of Tarl-
"ton, was in the habit of extemporizing
"and introducing matter of his own that
"has not come down to us. 'Let those
"that play your clowns speak no more
"than is set down for them' (Hamlet,
"Act. III, Scene II.). These words were
"aimed at Kemp, or one of his school,
"and it was about this date, according to
"Henslowe's Diary, that Kemp went over
"from the Lord Chamberlain to the Lord
"Nottingham players. The most import-
"ant duty of the clown was not to appear
"in the play itself, but to sing and dance
"his jig at the end of it, even after a trag-
"edy, in order to soften the painful im-

"pression—(Camden Society Papers)—
"Kemp's jig of 'The Kitchen Stuff
"Woman' was a screaming farce of rude
"verses, some spoken, others sung; of
"good and bad witticism; of extravagant
"acting and dancing. In the art of comic
"dancing Kemp was immoderately loved
"and admired. He paid professional vis-
"its to all the German and Italian courts,
"and was even summoned to dance his
"morris-dance before the Emperor Ru-
"dolph himself at Augsburg.

"Kemp combined shrewdness with his
"rough humor. With a view to extend-
"ing his reputation and his profits, he an-
"nounced in 1599, his intention of danc-
"ing a morris-dance from London to
"Norwich; but to his annoyance, every
"inaccurate report of his gambols was
"hawked about in publication at the time
"by book-sellers or ballad-makers, like
"Kemp's farewell to the tune of 'Kerry
"Merry Buff.' In order to check the cir-
"culation of falsehood, Kemp offered, he
"tells us, his first pamphlet to the press

"(though at the time he was thought to "have had a hand in writing the Anti- "Martnist plays and pamphlets — five "pieces erroneously attributed to his "pen). The only copy known is in the "Bodelean Library. The title ran "'Kemp's Nine Days Wonder,' the won- "der referred to being performed in a "dance from London to Norwich then "written by himself to satisfy his friends. "A woodcut on the title page shows Kemp "in elaborate costume with bells about "his knees playing to the accompaniment "of a drum and tabor, which a man at his "side is playing. This pamphlet was en- "tered in the Stationers Book April 22, "1600. The dedicatory salutation to "Anna Fritton," one of her Majesty's maids of honor, shows us how arrogant and conceited he must have been.

"Kemp started at seven o'clock in the "morning on the first Monday in Lent, "the starting point being in front of the "Lord Mayor's house, and half London "was astir to see the beginning of the

"great exploit. His suite consisted of his "taborer, Thomas Sly; his servant, Wil- "liam Bee; and his overseer or umpire, "George Sprat, who was to see that every- "thing was performed according to prom- "ise. According to custom, he put out a "sum of money before his departure on "condition of receiving thrice the amount "on his safe return. His own fatigues "caused him many delays and he did not "arrive in Norwich until twenty-three "days after his departure. He spent only "nine days in actual dancing on the road. "Kemp himself on this occasion contrib- "uted nothing to the music except the "sound of the bells, which were attached "to his gaiters. In Norwich thousands "waited to receive him in the open mar- "ket-place with an official concert. "Kemp, as guest of the town, was enter- "tained at its expense and received hand- "some presents from the Mayor who "arranged a triumphal entry for him. "The freedom of the Merchant Adven- "tures Company was also conferred upon

"him, thereby assuring him a share in "the yearly income to the amount of forty "shillings—a pension for life. The very "buskins in which he had performed his "dance were nailed to the wall in the Nor- "wich Guild Hall and preserved in per- "petual memory of the exploit, which was "long remembered in popular literature. "In an epilogue Kemp announced that he "was shortly to set forward as merrily as "I may; whither, I myself know not," and begged ballad makers to abstain from disseminating lying statements about him. Kemp's humble request to the impudent generation of ballad-makers, as he terms them, reads in part, "My nota- "ble Shake-rags, the effect of my suit is "discovered in the title of my supplica- "tion, but for your better understanding "for that I know you to be a sort of wit- "less bettle-heads that can understand "nothing but that is knocked into your "scalp; so farewell and crosse me no "more with thy rabble of bold rhymes "lest at my return I set a crosse on thy

"forehead that all men may know that "for a fool." It seems certain that Kemp kept his word in exhibiting his dancing powers on the continent. In Week's "Ayers" (1688) mention is made of Kemp's skipping into France. A ballad entitled "An Excellent New Medley" (dated about 1600) refers to his return from Rome. In the Elizabethan play "Jack Drum's Entertainment" (1616), however, there is introduced a song to which Kemp's morris dance is performed. Heywood, writing at this period, in his "Apology for Actors" (1612), says William Kemp was a comic actor of high reputation, as well in the favor of Her Majesty as in the opinion of the general audience. There is also a tribute from the pen of Richard Rathway (1618). Ben Jonson, William Rowly and John Marston also make mention of him.

Pretty much all that relates to the gambols of sportive Kemp in the foregoing pages is a mere transcription from the "Camden Society Papers."

Our prime object is to establish Kemp's eligibility as claimant for Greene's censure, before alluded to. We are content to advance the claim of another if found more decisive. We would elect to name Robert Wilson, senior, an old enemy, doubtless, of Robert Greene, if we did not think that Kemp has the better claim to that distinction. According to Collier, Wilson was not only an excellent performer, but also a talented dramatist, especially renowned for his ready repartee. Some writers affirm that the authors of the dramas "Faire Emm" and "Martin Marsixtus" were one and the same person, and that this person was Robert Wilson, senior, author of "Three "Ladies of London" and "Three Lords "and Ladies of London," the first published in 1584, and the other in 1590. "Faire Emm" and "Martin Marsixtus" having been posthumously printed, Greene was severe on the author of the former for his blamphemous introduction of quotations from the Bible into his love

passages. "We know that the author at-
"tacked Greene's own works in return
"and called them lascivious." He had not read the works, but, then, an anonymous writer may not very scrupulously confine himself to the truth. "Loth I was "to display myself to the world but for "that I hope to dance under a mask and "bluster out like the wind, which, though "every man heareth yet none can in sight "descrie." "I must answer in print what "they have offered on the stage" are the words of Greene.

Robert Wilson may be advanced as claimant for Greene's reproof by some persons who are of the opinion that "upstart crow" was both actor and playwright. Supposition says Kemp also wrote pamphlets and plays, although at this time he had not given his first and only work to the press. It matters little at whom he aimed, Kemp or Wilson, so long as Shakespere was not the object of the aimer. In the Parish Register of St. Giles, Cripplegate, we read, "Buried,

"Robert Wilson, yeoman, a player, 20
"Nov., 1600."

These facts and concurring events in the life of William Kemp convince us that Shakspere was not, and Kemp very probably was, the person at whom Greene leveled his satire by bearing witness to his (Kemp's) extemporizing power and his haughty and insolent demeanor in introducing improvisions and interpolations of his "own wit into poet's plays."

From the foregoing, it is evident that, at the time the letter was written, William Kemp enjoyed an unequaled and wide spread notoriety and transient fame, extending not only throughout England, but into foreign countries as well.

And further, by reason of his great prominence, in a calling which Greene loathed, and despised, he was brought easily within the range of the latter's contemptuous designation, of "upstart crow."

III

We have now reached the crucial matter of the address which, according to the speculative opinion of many of Shakspere's biographers, contains all the words and sentences which they hope, when racked, may be made to yield support to their tramp conjecture that Robert Greene was the first to discover Shakspere as a writer of plays, or the amendor of the works of other poets. The identifiable words, so called, are contained in the following sentences: "Yes, trust them "not; for there is an upstart crow, beau-"tified with our feathers, that, with his "Tyger's heart wrapt in a Player's hide."

"Upstart Crow" in Elizabethan English meant in general, one who assumed a lofty or arrogant tone, a bragging, boastful, swaggerer suddenly raised to prominence and power, as was Kemp after the death of Richard Tarlton (1589). In an epistle prefixed to Greene's "Arcadia"

(1587), Thomas Nash speaks of actors "As a company of taffaty fools with their "feathers;" and "The players decked "with poets' feathers like Aesop's "Crow" (R. B.); and again, "That with "his Tyger's heart wrapt in a Player's "hide." Tiger in the plain language of the day stood for bully, a noisy, insolent man, who habitually sought to overbear by clamors, or by threats. These characteristics are identifiable with Kemp; but the biographers of Shakspere are content to conjecture that Robert Greene's parody on the line "Oh Tyger's heart wrapt "in a woman's hide" is not only a contumelious reference to actor, William Shakspere, but also a declaration of his authorial integrity by their assignment of "Henry VI. Part III," which was in action at the "Rose," when Greene's celebrated address was written.

There is *prima-facie* evidence that Greene authored the line, which he semi-parodied in the address, which is found in two places. It appears in its

initial form "Oh Tyger's heart wrapt in "a serpent's hide" in the play called, "The Tragedy of Richard, Duke of "York," and "The Death of Good King "Henry the Sixth," and later with "woman" substituted for "serpent," again, it is found in the third part of "Henry VI.", founded on the true tragedy, which was acted by Lord Pembroke's company, of which, as Nash tells us, Greene was chief agent, and for which he wrote more than four other plays. "Henry VI. Part III" is generally admitted to be the work of Greene, Marlowe and perhaps Peele. Furthermore, the catchwords in the lines parodied betray their author, which is a confirmatory fact. To borrow a citation from the pages of Dr. A. Grosart, "Every one who "knows his Greene knows that over and "over again he returns on anything of "his that caught on, sometimes abridging "and sometimes expanding;" and in semi-parodying his own lines, wrapt "Ty-"ger's heart" in several kinds of hides.

It was William Kemp, the comic actor and dancer, not Shakspere, whom Greene wanted to hit. He did not consider as an author at all the "upstart crow" with his "Tyger's heart wrapt in a player's hide," who bombasted orally his own improvisions and interpolations out in blank verse.

In their great desire to discover Shakspere as the author, the words "bombast "out in blank verse" are seized upon by Shakspere's commentators with evident greediness. But these words yield nothing in support of author-craft, for bombast or bombastry, in the idiom of the time, stood for high sounding words which might have proceeded from the mouth of a buffoon, clown, jester, montebank or actor, whose profession was to amuse spectators by low antics and tricks, and whose improvisions and extemporizings were destitute of rhyme, but possessed of a musical rhythm called "blank "verse." The words "blank verse" were doubtless intended for the ear of Mar-

lowe, the great innovator, who was thus reminded that the notorious jig-dancer and clown, William Kemp, declaimed his own improvisions and interpolations in the "swelling bombast of a bragging "blank-verse," as Nash called it, and was an absolute "Johannes Factotum in his "own conceit"—that is, a person employed to do many things. Who could do more "in his own conceit" than Kemp, who spent his life in mad jigs, as he says? Who but Kemp, the chief actor in the low comedy scenes, who angered the academic play-writers by introducing "his own wit into their plays and make a merriment of "them?"

Greene's address to his fellow craftsmen does not convey plagiary, or a furbishable, imputation, nor give color to, nor the slightest circumstance for, the conjecture that Shakspere's authorial career had been begun as the amender of other poet's plays anterior to the putative authorship of "Venus and Adonis." Halliwell-Phillips, the most indefatigable

and reliable member of the Congress of Speculative Biographers, says that not one such play has been found revised, or amended, by Shakspere in his early career. Still in their extremity, Shakspere's commentators give hospitality to stupid conjectures that are not reasonable inferences from concurrent facts, and construe Greene's censure of Kemp, (inferentially) as the first literary notice of Shakspere. It shows an irrepressible desire without proof to confer authorship upon Shakspere one hundred and fifty years after his death. The Shakspere votaries cannot point to a single word, or sentence, in this celebrated address of Robert Greene which connects the contumelious name "Shake-scene" (dance-scene) with the characteristics of either the true, or the traditional, Shakspere.

The biographers of Shakspere never grow weary of charging Robert Greene with professional jealousy and envy. The charge has no argumentative value, even

if granting Shakspere's early productivity as a play-maker, or the amender of the works of other men, for Greene's activities ran in other lines; play-making was of minor importance, a sort of by-production of his resourceful and versatile pen. The biographers of Shakspere are unfortunate in having taken on this impression, because there is *prima-facie* evidence that Greene had forsworn writing for the stage a considerable time before the letter was written; thus he followed his friend Lodge, who in 1589 "vows to write no more of that whence "shame doth grow."

The biographers and commentators, agreeing in their asperities, charge Robert Greene with that worst of passions, envy, basing it conjecturally on the assumption of Shakspere's proficiency as a drama-maker, notwithstanding the sincere and earnest words contained in his most pathetic letter, addressed to three friends, in which he counsels them to give up play writing, which he regarded as de-

grading, placing their very necessities in the power of grasping shareholding actors, and rendering it no longer a fit occupation for gentlemen. They fail to see the dying should be granted immunity from this ignoble and base passion. Our own rule of law admits as good evidence the testimony of a man who believes himself to be dying, and so the letter states, "desirous that you should "live though himself be dying."

Robert Greene's charge against "up-"start crow" stands unshaken. Henry Chettle, the hack writer, and self admitted transcriber of the letter, does not retract Greene's statement. He denies nothing on behalf of an "upstart crow" (Kemp); for the author of "Kind Hearts Dreams" does not identify "Shake-"scene" (dance-scene) with Shakspere, or Shakespeare, who was not one of those who took offense. It is expressly stated that there were two of the three fellow dramatists, addressed by Greene (Marlowe, Nash and Peele). Still we are told

by Shakespearean writers that the dying genius was pained at witnessing the proficiency of another in the very activity (play-making), which he had come to regard as congruous with strolling vagabondism. He enjoined his friends to seek better masters "for it is a pittie men of "such rare wit should be subject to the "pleasure of such rude groomes," "painted monsters, apes, burrs, peasants, "puppets," not play-makers, but actors, who had been beholden to him and his fellow craftsmen whom he addressed.

There is another aspect in which the charge of professional jealousy presents itself to the mind of the reader; those who covet that which another possesses, or envies success, popularity or fortune. To charge Greene with envy is most uncharitable by reason of his versatility. Now what was there in the possession of William Shakspere in 1592 that could have awakened in the mind of Robert Greene so base a passion as envy. The name Shakspere had no commercial value

in 1592, for Shakspere of the stage is described many years after this date as merely a "man player" and "a deserving "man." Note this admission by Dr. Ingleby: "Assuredly no one during the "century had any suspicion that the gen- "ius of Shakespeare was unique." "His "immediate contemporaries expressed no "great admiration for either him, or his "works." There is not a particle of evidence to show that Robert Greene was envious of any writer of his time; nor had he cause to be; but the way his contemporaries and successors robbed and plundered him proves the reverse to be true.

"Nay, more, the men that so eclipst his fame,
"Purloynde his plumes; can they deny the same?"

The fact is, Shakspere passed through and out of life without having attained the distinction, or celebrity, won by Greene in his brief literary career of but nine short years. The more truthful of Shakspere's biographers concede that the

subject of their memoirs was not, in his day, highly regarded, and that his obscurity in 1592 is obvious. There was not the least danger of the author of "Hamlet" "driving to penury" the dean of English novelists, Robert Greene, who was supreme in prose romance, a species of literature, which appealed to the better class of the reading public. Rival-hating envy! Robert Greene cannot be brought within the scope of such a charge, for in 1592, he was not striving to obtain the same object which play writers were pursuing.

The fame of Robert Greene during his lifetime eclipsed that of his contemporaries. "He was in fact the popular au-"thor of the day. His contemporaries "applauded the facility with which he "turned his talents to account." "In a "night and a day," says Nash, "would he "have yearked up a pamphlet as well as "in seven years, and glad was that prin-"ter that might be so blest to pay him "dear for the very dregs of his wit."

Even Ben Jonson, "the greatest man of "the last age," according to Dryden, had no such assurance in his day, if we may judge from his own account of his literary life, which shows that he had to struggle for a subsistence, as no printer was found glad, or felt himself blest, to pay him dear for the cream, much less the very "dregs of his wit." He told Drummond that the half of his comedies were not in print, and that he had cleared but 200 pounds by all his labor for the public theatre. It has been said by one: "In the "breadth of his dramatic quality, his "range over every kind of poetic excel-"lence, Jonson was excelled by Shakes-"peare alone." (p. 437, "A Short His-"tory of the English People.") When not subsidized by the court he was driven by want to write for the London theatres; he lived in a hovel in an alley, where he took service with the notorious play broker. To such as he, reference is made by Henslow, who in his diary records "the grinding toil and the starvation

"wages of his hungry and drudging "bondsmen," who were struggling for the meanest necessities of life. This Titan of a giant brood of playwrights, in the days of his declension wrote mendicant epistles for bread, and, doubtless, in his extremity recalled Robert Greene, the admonisher of three brother poets "that "spend their wits in making plaies." "Base minded men, all three of you! if by "my miseries ye be not warned, for unto "none of you, like me, sought those burrs "to cleave, those puppits, I mean that "speak from our mouths those antics "garnisht in our colors. Is it not strange "that I, to whom they all have been be-"holding, shall, were ye in that case that "I am now, be both at once of them for-"saken? . . . . O that I might in-"treate your rare wits to be employed in "more profitable courses, and let those "apes imitate your past excellence, and "never more acquaint them with your ad-"mired inventions."

It was one of this breed of puppets, we

are told, who awakened incarnate envy in the breast of Robert Greene, and engendered rivalship against William Shakspere, whose votaries, in their dreams of fancy, see him revising the dramatic writings of Robert Greene, the most resourceful, versatile, tireless and prolific of literary men. He was a writer of greatest discernment from the viewpoint of the people of his time, "for he pos-"sessed the ability to write in any vein "that would sell." He only, of all the writers of his time, gave promise of being able to gain a competence by the pen alone, a thing which no writer did, or could do, in that day, by writing for the stage alone. Hon. Cushman K. Davis in "The Law in Shakespeare" says, "He "(Shakspere) is the first English author "who made a fortune with his pen." In the absence of credible evidence, Mr. Davis assumes that the young man who came up from Stratford was the author of the plays. The senator does not seem aware of the fact that Shakspere of

Stratford was a shareholding actor, receiving a share in the theatre, or its profits, in 1599; a partner in one or more of the chief companies; a play broker who purchased and mounted the plays of other men; and that he, like Burbage, Henslowe and Alleyn, speculated in real estate. He was shrewd in money matters and became very wealthy, but not by writing plays. Suppose that William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon had authored all the plays associated with his name, that alone would not have made him wealthy. The price of a play varied from four to ten pounds, and all Shakspere's labors for the public theatre would have brought no more than five hundred pounds. The diary of Philip Henslowe makes it clear that up to the year 1600 the highest price he ever paid was six pounds. The Shakespeare plays were not exceptionally popular in that day, not being then as now, "the talk of the town." Not one of them equalled in popularity

Kid's "The Spanish Tragedy," or Marlowe's "Dr. Faustus."

Shakespeare was soon superseded by Fletcher in popular regard. Only one of the Shakespeare tragedies, one historical play, and eight comedies were presented at the Court of James First, who reigned twenty-two years. Plays, written by such hack writers as Dearborn, or Chettle, were quite as acceptable to princes.

Robert Greene's romances were "a bower of delight," a kind of writing held in high favor by all classes. Sir Thomas Overbury describes his chambermaid as reading Greene's works over and over again. It is a pleasure to see in the elder time Greene's writings in hands so full of household cares, since he labored to make young lives happy. Robert Greene's works express every variation in the changing conditions of life. The poetry of his pastoral landscapes are vivid word pictures of English sylvan scenes. The western sky on amorous autumn days is mantled with sheets of burnished gold.

The soft and gentle zephyr blows over castled crag and fairy glen fragrant with the breath of flowers.

In the manuals of our literature great prominence is given to the fact that Greene led a dissolute, or irregular, life, as if the debauchment of the author was transmitted by his writings. There are no indecencies in his works to attest the passage of a debauchee. Like many persons born to, and nurtured by, religious parents, Greene doubtless exaggerated his own vices. He was bad, but not altogether bad. It may truly be said of him that, in regard to all that pertains to penitence and self abasement, he spares not himself, but like John Bunyan, he was given to selfupbraiding. He (Bunyan) declares that it is true that he let loose the reins on the neck of his lust; that he delighted in all transgressions against the divine law; and that he was the ring leader of the youth of Elstow in all vice. But, when those who wished him ill, accused him of licentious amours, he called

God and the angels to attest his purity. No woman, he said, in heaven, earth, or hell, could charge him with having ever made any improper advances to her. Blasphemy and Sabbath-breaking seem to have been Bunyan's only transgression after all. In Robert Greene's writings, we have the reverse of "Herrick's shame-"ful pleading that if his verse was im-"pure, his life was chaste." Unlike Herrick, Greene did not minister to the unchaste appetite of readers for tainted literature, either in his day, or in the after time. Powerless to condemn Greene's writings, Shakspere's votaries would desecrate his ashes.

Deplore as we must his dissolute living, it was of short duration, for he went from earth at the age of two and thirty, and the evil effects have been lost in Time's abatements. His associates, doubtless were as dissolute as he himself. Nash wrote: "With any notorious crime "I never knew him tainted, and he inher-"ited more virtues than vices." The

reader, at any rate, will give but little credence to the accusations of such a hyena-dog as Gabriel Harvey. Robert Greene was not "lip-holy," nor heart-hollow, for, in regard to his wife and their separation, "he took to himself all "blame, breathed never a word against "her, and did not squander all of his "earnings in dissipation, but sent part of "his income to the good woman, the wife "of his youth, and addressed to her in "loving trust the last letter he wrote." Gabriel Harvey, drenched in hate, could not rob the "Sweet-wife letter of its "pathos."

In all the galleries of noble women, Greene's heroines deserve a foremost place, for all the gracious types of womanhood belonged to Greene, before they became Shakespeare's. "Robert Greene "is the first of our play-writers to repre-"sent upon the public stage the purity "and sweetness of wife and maiden." Unselfish love and maternity are sketched with feminine delicacy and minuteness of

touch in all the tenderness of its purity. His writings have assauged the sorrow of the self-sacrificing mother, who is always a queen uncrowned, long suffering and faithful. Robert Green "is always on the "side of the angels." When loud mouthed detraction calls him badhearted, we should not forget that this confessedly dissolute man could, and did, keep inviolate the purity of his imagination; few have left a wealthier legacy in feminine models of moral and physical beauty. What is most characteristic in the pages of Greene is the absence of the indecencies which attest the passage of the author of "Lear," "the damnable scenes "which raised the anger of Swinburn and "which Coleridge attempted in vain to "palliate."

Little is known of Greene's life; and into the little we do know, his malignant enemy, Gabriel Harvey, has attempted to inject a deadly virus. The inaccurate figurative expressions in his reputed posthumously printed works (an alleged

description of his manner of life) cannot be interpreted literally, "but may be "resolved in a large measure into morbid "self-upbraidings like the confession "made by the revival convert who sees "and paints his past in its very darkest "colors." But why should the modern reader linger over the irregularities of dissolute-living authors like Greene and Poe, whose writings are exceptionally clean. Remember Robert Burns' noble words, "What done we partly may com- "pute but know not what resisted." The commentators and pharisaic critics, who have written concerning Greene, are mere computists of the poet's vices; ministers of hate, who burlesque the poet's soul stiffening with despair, and display their ghoulish instincts "in travestying "so pathetic and tragical a deathbed as "Greene's." Students of Elizabethan literature know that Robert Greene resisted the temptation to write in the best paying vein of the age, that of ministering to the unchaste appetites of readers

for ribaldries. "To his undying honor "Robert Greene, equally with James "Thompson, left scarcely a line, that, dy- "ing, he need have wished to blot out."

There is no record extant of his living likeness. Chettle gives this pleasant description of his personal appearance, "With him was the fifth, a man of indif- "ferent years; of face, amiable; of body, "well proportioned; his attire after the "habit of scholar-like gentleman, only his "hair was somewhat long, whom I sup- "posed to be Robert Greene, Master of "Arts." Nash notices his tawny beard, "a jolly long red peake like the spire of "a steeple which he cherished continually "without cutting, whereat a man might "hang a jewel, it was so harp and pend- "ant." Harvey, who had never seen Greene, says that he wore such long hair as was only worn by thieves and cut-throats, and taunts Nash with wearing the same "unseemly superfluity." The habit of wearing the hair long is not unusual with poets. John Milton "cher-

"ished the same superfluity" as does also Joaquin Miller.

Robert Greene expired on the third of September, 1592. When the dead genius was in his grave, Harvey gloated and leered with hellish glee, and wrote of Greene's "most woeful and rascal estate, "how the wretched fellow or, shall I say, "the prince of beggars, laid all to gage "fore some few shillings and was at- "tended by lice." This is one of Harvey's malignant, vitriolic, discharges in his attempt to spatter the memory and deface the monument of the dead. "Achilles "tortured the dead body of Hector, and, "as Antonious and his wife, Fulva, tor- "mented the lifeless corpse of Cicero, so "Gabriel Harvey hath showed the same "inhumanities to Greene that lies low in "his grave." The testimony of Gabriel Harvey, whose malignant attacks on the memory of Greene by monstrously exaggerated statement, is vitiated by his own statement that " he was cheated out of an

"action for libel against Greene by his "death."

Harvey was vulgarly ostentatious, courting notoriety by the gorgeousness of his apparel; currying favor with the great, and aping Venetian gentility after his return from Italy. He was a dabbler in astrology, a prognosticator of earthquakes, and constructor of prophetic almanacs. The failure of his predictions subjected him to much bitter ridicule. His inordinate vanity is best shown by his publication of everything spoken or written in commendation of himself, by his obsequious friends and flatterers, who snickered with the public generally, as he was an object of ridicule, the butt on which to crack their jokes.

In one of those fanciful studies in Elizabethan literature, which we now hold in our hand, we may read, in a work called "A Snip for an Upstart Courtier "or A Quaint Dispute Between Velvet-"-breeches and Cloth-breeches," that Greene has very vulgarly libeled Har-

vey's ancestry; but, when we turn to Greene's book we learn that the vulgarity consists in calling Gabriel Harvey's father a ropemaker. Only a snob would regard any honest employment as a degradation, and furthermore, the passage does not point contumeliously and spitefully at Gabriel Harvey's father, for the reference is very slight. "How is he "(Gabriel's father) abused?" writes Nash, "Instead of his name he is called "by the craft he gets his living with." Still the lines which so mortally offended Gabriel were suppressed by Greene. Notwithstanding this, those biographers and critics whose sole object is to blacken the poet's memory, conceal from the reader the fact of the detachment of all reference to a rope-maker. Harvey was extremely anxious to push himself among the aristocracy in order to conceal his humble antecedents.

With all his faults, there was nothing of this weakness or snobbishness in Robert Greene, who had himself sprung from the

common people, though born to good condition. Robert Burton, a contemporary, writing in "The Spacious Time of the "Great Elizabeth" says that idleness was the mark of the nobility, and to earn money in any kind of trade was despicable. Gabriel Harvey flung in Greene's face the fact that he made a living by his pen. Had young Greene lived a longer life, with all its wealth of bud and bloom, we should now have in fruition a luxuriance of imagination and versatility of diction possessed by few. With longer life he would doubtless "have gained "mastery of himself, when he would have "gone forward on the path of moral re-"generation;" for there was in the poet's strivings, during the last few years of his life, the promise and prophecy of a glorious future. His soul enlarged, he battled for the commonweal; his heart was with the lowly and his voice was for the right when freedom's friends were few.

In his play "The Pinner of Wake-

"field," first printed in 1599, Robert Greene makes a hero, and a very strenuous one, of a mere pound-keeper who proudly refuses knighthood at the hands of the king. In the sketch given by Professor J. M. Brown we read, "In the first "scene of the play when Sir Nicolas Man- "nering appears in Wakefield with his "commission from the rebel, Earl of Ken- "dal, and demands victuals for the rebel "army, the stalwart pound-keeper steps "forward, makes the knight eat his words "and then his seal! 'What! are you in "'choler? I will give you pills to cool "'your stomach. Seest thou these seals? "'Now by my father's soul, which was a "'yeoman's when he was alive, eat them "'or eat my dagger's point, proud "'squire!' The Earl of Kendal and other "noblemen next appear in disguise and "send their horses into the Pinner's corn "to brave him. The pound-keeper ap- "proaches and after altercation strikes "the Earl. Lord Bondfield says, 'Villain, "'what hast thou done? Thou hast struck

"'an Earl.' Pinner answers, 'Why, what "'care I? A poor man that is true is bet-"'ter than an earl if he be false'." A yeoman boxing or cuffing the ear of an earl! This has all the breezy freshness of American democracy.

"How different from this is Shakes-"peare's conception of the place of the "working-man in society. In King Lear, "a good servant protests against the cru-"elty of Regan and Cornwall toward "Gloucester, and is killed for his cour-"age." "Give me my sword," cries Regan, "a peasant stand up thus!" The voice of the yeoman is often heard in Greene's drama, not as buffoon and lackey, as in Shakespeare, but as freeman whose voice is echoed at Naseby and Marston's gory fields of glory, where the sturdy yeomanry of England strove to do and to dare for the eternal right—soldiers who never cowered from "sheen of "spear," nor blanched at flashing steel. With Greene rank is never the measure of merit as with Shakespeare. To peer

and yeoman alike, he gave equal hospitality; for Robin Greene, as his friends called him, was as friendly to the poor man's rags as to the purple Robe of King. Greene in his popular sympathies is thoroughly with the working classes, the common people, of whom Lincoln says, "God loves most, otherwise he "would not have made so many of them." His heroes and heroines are taken, many of them, from humble life. In his Pinner of Wakefield there is a very clear discernment of democratic principle in the struggle against prerogative. Half of those plays of Greene's which we still possess, are devoted to the representation of the life of the common people which gave lineage to Abraham Lincoln, Benjamin Franklin and John Bunyan. If these are any guide to his character, his is one distinguished both by his amicable and by his amiable qualities.

We have in the "Coney-catching se-"ries" Greene's exposure of the practice of sharpers and knaves, who were fleec-

ing the country people who came to London. The author of these tracts shows great courage in his effort to abate foolcatching. Greene's life was threatened, and it required the utmost exertion of his friends to prevent his assassination. The Coney-catching knaves, who felt the halter being drawn about their necks, threatened to cut off his hand if he would not desist. Greene, notwithstanding these threats, would not be swerved from his noble aim, but met them like a true Roman, single-handed and alone, while his literary enemies took advantage of this opportunity to blacken his good name. "Greene made these revelations for the "good of the commonwealth, and dis- "played great courage in facing all risks "in so doing. No books are more out- "and-out sincere."

Greene's account of the repentance and reformation of a fallen woman, told in a way that discloses the poet's kindness of heart and fullness of humanitarian spirit, reveals his better self. "He as-

"sured his readers, in the words of the "woman herself, that her first false step "gradually led her on to complete ruin, "so heavy-burdened with grief and "shame that death seemed to her a bene-"faction, and the grave the only place for "perfect rest." Not a few there may have been, who, on reading Greene's account of the reformation and redemption of this unfortunate woman, were started on the path of regeneration, while the dim-eyed critic can see nothing but the blurred reputation of the poet. But who shall estimate Robert Greene's influence on individual happiness? Who shall say how many thousands have been made wiser, happier, and better by a writer who held out a kind and friendly hand, and had a heart as true behind it? His statue would crown Trafalgar's towering shaft more worthily than the statue of England's greatest naval hero does; for there is more true honor and merit in the man who wrote purely to bring back from evil courses to a state of moral rec-

titude, than in a monument for the victory over many enemies.

Greene's non-dramatic works are the largest contribution left by any Elizabethan writer to the novel literature of the day. "He was at once the most ver-"satile and the most laborious of literary "men." Famous, witty, and brilliant, he was one of the founders of English fiction, and is conceded to be the author of half a dozen plays for the theatre. In them we have the mere "flotsam and jet-"sam" of his prolific pen. What would we not give for all the plays of Robert Greene from whom his contemporaries and successors purloyned plumes! According to Ben Jonson, it was as safe to pillage from Greene in his day, as it is to persecute his reputation in ours. He was a graduate of both universities, was a man of genius, but did not live to do his talents full justice. A born story teller, like Sir Walter Scott, he could do good work easily and quickly.

We glean the following from the pages

of "The English Novel in the Time of "Shakespeare," by J. J. Jusserand, "Greene's prose tale, 'Pandosto, the Tri-"'umph of Time,' had an extraordinary "success, while Shakspere's drama 'Win-"'ter's Tale' founded on Greene's Pan-"dosto was not printed, either in authen-"tic or pirated shape, before the appear-"ance of the 1623 folio, while Greene's "prose story was published in 1588 and "was renamed half a century later, 'The "'History of Dorostus and Fawnia.' So "popular was it that it was printed again "and again. We know of at least seven-"teen editions, and in all likelihood there "were more throughout the seventeenth "century, and even under one shape or "another throughout the eighteenth. It "was printed as a chap-book during this "last period and in this costume began a "new life. It was turned into verse in "1672, but the highest and most extraor-"dinary compliment of Greene's per-"formance was its translation into "French, not only once but twice. The

"first time was at a moment when the "English language and literature were "practically unknown and as good as "non-existent to French readers. In fact "every thing from Greene's pen sold. All "of his writings enjoyed great popular- "ity in their day, and, after the lapse of "three centuries, have been deemed wor- "thy of publication, insuring the reha- "bilitation of Greene's splendid genius."

We are content to believe that almost all of the so-called posthumous writings of Robert Greene are spurious, and that but few genuine chips were found in the literary work-shop of the poet after his death. We accept the very striking and impressive address to his brother playwrights, the after-words to a "Groats Worth of Wit." We also may shyly accept the sweet wife letter as the authentic product of the poet's mind, heart and hand. Of this letter, there are two versions, neither of which are very trustworthy, as both are from posthumed pamphlets. One, which we believe to be a

forgery, is found in "The Repentance." The other is found in a pamphlet written by his malignant enemy, Harvey, which contains an account of the poet's last illness and death. Nash writes about Harvey, "From the lousy circumstance of his "poverty before his death and sending "that miserable writt to his wife, it can-"not be but thou lyest, learned Gabriel." We would not set down as auto-biographical the posthumous pamphlets, even though of unquestioned authenticity, for in the repentance Greene is made to say, "I need not make long discourse of my "parents who for their gravitie and hon-"est life are well known and esteemed "among their neighbors, namely in the "citie of Norwich where I was bred and "borne;" and then he is made to contradict all this in "Groats Worth of Wit," where the father is called Gorinius, a despicable miser. "Greene is not known to "have had a brother to be the victim of "his cozenage."

As "there is a soul of truth in things

"erroneous," there may be a soul of truth in the following letter contained in "The "Repentance":

"Sweet wife, if ever there was any "good will or friendship between thee "and me, see this bearer (my host) "satisfied of his debt. I owe him tenne "pounds and but for him I had per- "ished in the streetes. Forget and for- "give my wrongs done unto thee and "Almighty God have mercie on my "soule. Farewell till we meet in hea- "ven for on earth thou shalt never see "me more.

"This 2nd day of Sept., 1592.

"Written by thy dying husband,

"ROBERT GREENE."

The reader will notice the statement in the posthumed letter that the poet had contracted a debt to the sum of ten pounds, equal to $400 present money, but there is nothing whatever about leaving many papers in sundry bookseller's hands which Chettle averred in the address "To the Gentlemen Readers Kind "Hearts Dreame." If this were a fact,

the bookseller doubtless would have been called upon; "see this bearer (my host) "satisfied of his debt," and sweet wife would not have bourne the burden while booksellers felt themselves blest to pay dear for the very dregs of her husband's wit.

Those writers who express no doubt of the authenticity of the posthumed pamphlets, leave their readers to set down as auto-biographical whatever portions of those pieces he may think proper. At the same time the trend of impulse is given the reader by the critics that he may not fail to read the story of the poet's life out of characters devoid of all faith in honesty and in virtue, while the author (Greene) is anxious evidently to point a moral by them and reprove vice. These forged pamphlets and so-called auto-biographical pamphlets make Greene accuse himself of crimes which he surely did not commit, such as the crime of theft and murder. He says, "I exceeded all "others in these kinds of sinnes," and he

is represented as the most atrocious villain that ever walked the earth. There is not an atom of evidence adduced to show Francisco in "Never Too Late" was intended by the author for a picture of himself, and we do not believe that Greene wrote the pamphlet in which Roberto, in "Groats Worth of Wit" is one of the despicable characters.

Very little is known with any degree of certainty concerning the personal life of Robert Greene, and very little, if anything, in regard to his family or ancestry, although much prominence is given by imaginary writers to the history of his person in the manuals of our literature. These writers attach an auto-biographical reality to their dreams of fancy. They take advantage of Greene's unbounded sincerity and his own too candid confession in the address to the playwriters, and of his irrepressible desire to sermonize, whether in plays or pamphlets, with all the fervor of a devout Methodist having a license to exhort. The closest

analogy to Greene's position, in fact, is that of the revival preacher—as Prof. Storojenko puts it—"who, to make the "picture of the present as telling as pos- "sible, sees and paints his past in its very "blackest colors. This self-flagellation is "strongly connected with a really attrac- "tive feature of Greene's character; we "mean his sincerity, a boundless sincerity "which never allowed him to spare him- "self. Robert Greene was incapable of "posing and pretending to be what he "was not. This is why we may fearlessly "believe him when he speaks of the an- "guish of his soul and the sincerity of "his repentance. A man whose deflection "from the path of virtue cost him so "much moral suffering cannot, of course, "be measured by the same standard as "the man who acts basely, remains at "peace with himself and defends his "faults by all kinds of sophistry. Speak- "ing further of his literary labors, he "never dealt in personalities in exposing "some of the crying nuisances of London

"and is perfectly silent as to the moral "change in his own character, which was "the fruit of his dealing with them. In "a word, he conceals all that might, in his "opinion, modify the sentence that he "pronounces on his own life for the edi- "fication of others."

IV

There is a commendative piece of writing which should be read in connection with Greene's letter to "divers play-"makers." We refer to the preface to "Kind Hearts Dreams," written by Henry Chettle, which was registered December 8, 1592. Chettle says, "About "three months since died M. Robert "Greene, leaving many papers in sundry "book-seller's hands, among others, his "'Groats Worth of Wit' in which a letter "written to diverse play-makers is offen-"sively by one or two of them taken." Chettle's statement about many papers in sundry book-sellers hands may be discredited because of the poet's urgent necessities, and the strong desire on the part of book-sellers to publish Greene's writings. Of this we may be sure, that the letter was not placed in book-sellers hands by Greene or for him. He would not have called his friends to repentance

in that way, for it would have given publicity to the defects in the lives of his friends as well as his own.

The letter evidences the fact of its having been written as a private letter to three of the poet's friends (Marlowe, Nash and Peele). If sent, it did not reach them, but was surreptitiously procured, doubtless, by some hack-writer, (inferentially, Henry Chettle, who transcribed it.) Gabriel Harvey may have been accessory to its procurement, as his ghoulish instinct led him to visit the poor shoemaker's house where Greene died, on the day following the poet's funeral in search of matter foul and defamatory, and with ink of slander to blacken the poet's memory. This snobbish ape of gentility, Gabriel Harvey, hated Greene because he called his father by "the craft he gets his "living with." However, when Greene learned that Harvey was ashamed of his father's humble employment, that of ropemaker, he straightway canceled the offensive allusion, but Harvey still con-

tinued to manifest the same hateful malignity and venomous spite. The letter is a fine character study of the three poets addressed. Greene drew out the true feature of every distinguishing mark or trait, both mental and moral, of these, his fellow-craftsmen, who, though he did not name them, are asserted to be Marlowe, Nash and Peele. Greene characterized them individually, and twice he collectively admonished them thus, "Base "minded men all three of you, if by my "miseries ye be not warned," and, in the concluding part of the letter, "But now "return I again to you three, knowing my "miseries is to you no news and let me "heartily entreat you to be warned by "my harmes."

All of Shakspere's biographers and commentators aver that Shakspere was not one of the three persons addressed. How then could Chettle's words bear witness to his (Shakspere's) civil demeanor or factitious grace in writing. Mr. Fleay stated many years ago (1886) that there

was an entire misconception of Chettle's language that Shakspere was not one of those who took offense. They are expressly stated to have been two of the three authors addressed by Greene. The recent Shakespearean writers have evidently mistaken Chettle's placation of Nash or Peele, or either of the three playmakers addressed by Greene, it does not matter which, for an apology to Shakspere, who was not the object of Greene's satire or Chettle's placation for were not Nash, Marlowe and Peele each "excellent "in the quality he professes?" Had they not lived in an age of compliment they would have merited these complimental phrases of Henry Chettle? For their names were in the trump of fame.

Christopher Marlowe, the first great English poet, was the father of English tragedy and the creator of English blank verse. He is, by general consent, identified with the first person addressed by Greene, "With thee will I first begin, "thou famous gracer of tragedians, who

"hath said in his heart there is no God. "Why should thy excellent wit, His gift, "be so blinded that thou should give no "glory to the giver?" The second person referred to is identifiable with Thomas Nash, "With thee I join, young "juvenall, that byting satyrist," though not with equal accord, as the first with Marlowe, as some few persons prefer to name Thomas Lodge. This prediliction for Lodge is based on their having been co-authors in the making of a play ("That lastlie with me together writ a "comedie"). This fact, however, signifies very little, for it is generally conceded that Marlowe, Nash, Peele, Lodge and Greene mobilized their literary activities in the production of not a few of the earlier plays called Shakspere's.

We are convinced that Lodge was not the person addressed by Greene as young juvenall. He was absent from England at the date of Greene's letter, having left in 1591 and did not return till 1593. Moreover, he had declared his intention

long before to write no more for the theatre. In 1589 he vowed "to write no more "of that whence shame doth grow." At Christmas time in 1592 he was in the Straits of Magellan. Born in 1550, Lodge led a virtuous and quiet life. He was seventeen years older than Nash, and four years older than Greene, who would not, in addressing one four years his senior, have used these words, "Sweet boy "might I advise thee." The youthfulness of Nash fits well. He was boyish in appearance. Born in Nov., 1567, he was seven years younger than Greene, and was the youngest member of their fellowship. The mild reproof "for his too "much liberty of speech" contained in the letter, justifies the belief that Thomas Nash was referred to as "young juvenall, "that byting satyrist, who had vexed "scholars with bitter lines."

The equal unanimity and general consent which identifies the first with Marlowe, identifies the third and last person, who had been co-worker in drama making

of the same fellowship, with George Peele, "and thou no less deserving than "the other two, in some things rarer, in "nothing inferior" driven (as myself) to "extreame shifts, a little have I to say to "thee." Chettle could, however, have bourne witness to Peele "his civil de- "meanor and factitious grace in writ- "ing." Peele held the situation of city poet and conductor of pageants for the court. His first pageant bears the date of 1585, his earliest known play, "The "Arraignment of Paris" was acted before 1584. "Peele was the object of pat- "ronage of noblemen for addressing lit- "erary tributes for payment. The Earl "of Northumberland seems to have pre- "sented him with a fee of three pounds. "In May, 1591, when Queen Elizabeth "visited Lord Burleigh's seat of Thea- "bald, Peele was employed to compose "certain speeches addressed to the queen, "which deftly excused the absence of the "master of the house, by describing in "blank verse in his 'Polyphymnic,' the

"honorable triumph at tilt. Her majesty "was received by the Right Honorable "the Earl of Cumberland." In January, 1595, George Peele, Master of Arts, presented his "Tale of Troy" to the great Lord Treasurer through a simple messenger, his eldest daughter, "necessities "servant." Peele was a practised rhetorician, who embellished his writings with elegantly adorned sentences and choice fancies. He was a man of polished intellect and social gifts, and possessed of a very winsome personality. "His soft, caressing woman voice" low, sweet and soothing, may have had a considerable effect upon Chettle, and could not have been unduly honored by Chettle's apology in witnessing "his civil de- "meanor and factitious grace in writ- "ing."

As Henry Chettle had been brought into some discredit by the publication of Greene's celebrated letter, and his admission that he re-wrote it, we know that the letter must have been surreptitiously pro-

cured as evidenced by its contents. The letter is as authentic, doubtless, as any garbled or mutilated document may be; but Chettle's foolish statement contained in his preface to "Kind Hearts Dreams" has awakened the suspicion, in regard to the authorship of "Groats Worth of "Wit," that, while the letter (or as much as Chettle chose to have published) is genuine, "I put something out," the pamphlet "Groats Worth of Wit" is spurious, and evidently not the work of Robert Greene. Who can be content to believe Chettle's statement that Greene placed this criminating letter in the hands of printers, or that it was left in their hands by others at his request? A private letter, written to three friends, who have been co-workers in drama-making, calling them to repentance, charging one (Marlowe) with diabolical atheism! This was a very serious charge in those times, when persons were burnt at the stake for professing their unbelief in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Chettle was the first to make current the charge of atheism against Marlowe, the one of them that took offense, and whose acquaintance he (Chettle) did not seek. Chettle reverenced Marlowe's learning, and would have his readers believe that he did greatly mitigate Greene's charge, but the contents of the letter as transcribed by Chettle and printed by the bookmakers, discredit Chettle's statement, as the charge of diabolical atheism was not struck out, and was, if proven, punishable by death.

There is no evidence adduced to show that Marlowe was indignant because of Greene's admonition, contained in a private letter written to three play-makers of his own fellowship, but resented the public charge of atheism, for which he, Chettle, as accessory and transcriber, was chiefly responsible in making public. We know that Marlowe was in retreat at the time of his death at Deptford, for in May, 1593, following the publication of Greene's letter printed at the end of the

pamphlet, "Groats Worth of Wit," the Privy Council issued a warrant for Marlowe's arrest. A copy of Marlowe's blasphemies, so called, was sent to Her Highness, and endorsed by one Richard Bame, who was soon after hanged at Tyburn for some loathsome crime. But a few days later, before Marlowe's apprehension, they wrote in the parish-book at Deptford on June 1st "Christopher Marlowe "slain by Francis Archer." At the age of thirty, he, "the first and greatest in-"heritor of unfulfilled renown," went where "Orpheus and where Homer are."

The loss to English letters in Marlowe's untimely death cannot be measured, nevertheless, England of that day was spared the infamy of his execution. However, the zealots of those days found a subject, in Francis Kett, a fellow of Marlowe's college, who was burnt in Norwich in 1589 for heresy. Unlike Marlowe, he was a pious, God-fearing man who fell a victim to the strenuousity with which he maintained his religious convic-

tions. Another subject was found in the person of Bartholomew Leggett, who was burnt at the stake for stating his confession of faith, which was identical with the religious belief of Thomas Jefferson and President William H. Taft. The times were thirsty for the blood of daring spirits. The shores of the British Isles were strewn with the wreckage of the great Armada. In Germany, Kepler (he of the three laws) was struggling to save his poor old mother from being burnt at the stake for a witch. In Italy, they burnt Bruno at the stake while Galileo played recanter.

That Marlowe was one of the playmakers who felt incensed at the publication of Greene's letter admits of no doubt. He most likely would have resented the public charge of atheism. "With neither "of them that take offense was I ac- "quainted (writes Chettle) and with one "of them (Marlowe) I care not if I never "be." In such blood bespattered times, Chettle could and did write "for the first

"(Marlowe) whose learning I reverence,
"and at the perusing of Greene's book
"(letter) struck out what in conscience I
"thought he in some displeasure writ, or
"had it been true yet to publish it was
"intolerable." Chettle's conscience must have been a little seared, for he omitted to strike out the only statement of fact contained in the letter, which could have imperiled the life of Marlowe! The letter evidences the fact that all of that portion referring to Marlowe was not garbled, and that there was not any intolerable something struck out, but instead, as transcriber for the pirate publisher, he retained the fulminating passage, "had "said in his heart there is no God." Notwithstanding Chettle's statement, we are of the opinion that the passage about Marlowe was printed in its integrity.

Chettle's having failed to omit the charge of diabolical atheism, reveals the strong personal antipathy he had for Marlowe. Few there are who set up Marlowe as claimant for Chettle's apology,

and fewer still, who would not regard him worthy of the compliment, "factitious "grace in writing," and whose acquaintance Chettle did not seek, but whose fascinating personality and exquisite feeling for poetry was the admiration of Drayton and Chapman, who were among the noblest, as well as the best loved, of their time. George Chapman was among the few men whom Ben Jonson said he loved. Anthony Wood described him as " a per- "son of most reverend aspect, religious "and temperate qualities." Chapman sought conference with the soul of Marlowe:

"Of his free soul whose living subject stood
"Up to the chin in the Pierian flood."

Henry Chettle's act of placation is offered to one of two of the three playmakers addressed, and not to the actor referred to, who was not one of those addressed; therefore, "upstart crow" could not have been the recipient of Chettle's

apology, or placation, in whose behalf ("upstart crow") Chettle retracts nothing. The following reference is to one of the offended playmakers pointed at in Greene's address, whom Chettle wishes to placate, "The other whome at that time "I did not so much spare as since I wish "I had—that I did not I am as sorry as "if the original fault had been my fault "because myself have seen his demeanor "no less civil excellent in the qualities he "professes; besides, divers of worship "have reported his uprightness of deal-"ing, which argues his honesty and his "factitious grace in writing that ap-"proves his art." With the votaries of Shakspere, however, these words of Chettle chime with their dreams of fancy; for there is a pre-inclination and a predetermination to read Shakspere into them, as if the words of Greene and Chettle were not accessible to all inquirers—words that can be made to comprehend only one of the two playmakers that take offense, who must be one of the three (Marlowe,

Nash and Peele) admonished by Greene, and who were of his fellowship. The reader, after studying Elizabethan literature and history, is content to believe that the least celebrated of the three playmakers pointed at in Greene's address (Marlowe, Nash and Peele), stood high enough in the scale of literary merit in 1592 to be the recipient of Chettle's praise.

The word "quality," in "excellent in "the quality he professes," is by the fantastically inclined, made to yield a convenient connotation, but in the ordinary and contextural meaning of the word, may embrace all that makes or helps to make any person such as he is. Are these words of Chettle written in 1592 when the theatre was lying under a social ban, and the actor was still a social outcast, identifiable with a vagabond at law, or with Thomas Nash, who took his bachelor's degree at Cambridge in 1585? "In the "autumn of 1592, Nash was the guest of "Archbishop Whitgift at Croydon,

"whither the household had retired for "fear of the plague, and, as the official "antagonist of Martin Marprelate was "constrained to keep up such a character "as would enable divers of worship to re-"port his uprightness of dealing," he certainly was entitled to commendation for his "factitious grace in writing." The appropriation of the complimentary remarks of Chettle on Nash, or any one of the three playmakers addressed, to Shakspere, who was not one of those addressed, and therefore, could not have been the recipient of Chettle's apology, so called, is one of the fancies in which critics of the highest reputation have indulged. There is nothing equal to this in all the annals of literature, unless it be "Cicero's famous letter to Lucretius, in "which he asks the historian to lie a little "in his favor in recording the events of "his consulship, for the sake of making "him a greater man."

Chettle lost no time in transcribing the posthumous letter. Doubts as to "Groats

"Worth of Wit" were entertained at the time of publication. Some suspected Nash to have had a hand in the authorship, others accused Chettle. Nash did take offense at the report that it was his. Its publication caused much excitement and the rumor went abroad that the pamphlet was a forgery. "Other news I am "advised of," writes Nash, in an epistle prefixed to the second edition of "Pierce-"penniless," "that a scald, trivial, lying "pamphlet called 'Greene's Groats Worth "'of Wit' is given out to be of my doing. "God never have care of my soul, but ut-"terly renounce me, if the least word or "syllable in it proceeded from my pen, or "if I were any way privy to the writing "or printing of it." We regard these words confirmatory of the fact that "Groats Worth of Wit" is not a work of unquestioned authenticity, and, furthermore, that Nash did not believe it the work of Robert Greene. *Prima facie,* it is spurious, for Nash spoke in high praise of Greene's writings. He neither would,

nor could, have used the words "scald, tri-"vial, lying" of a genuine work of Robert Greene, whose writings were held in high favor by all classes. Nash could not have taken offense at the allusion of Greene, which was rather complimental, though personal, and not intended for publication; but it did, however, contain some slight mixture of censure,—"Sweet boy, "might I advise thee, get not many eni-"mies by bitter words. Blame not schol-"ars vexed with sharp lines if they re-"prove thy too much liberty of reproof." Nash was very angry, but only because Greene's letter was given to the public by Chettle, who felt constrained to placate "that byting satyrist," whose raillery he had reason to fear, by bearing witness to "his civil demeanor and factitious grace "in writing."

Votaries of Shakspere may take their choice of one of the three addressed. Which one shall be named? What matter it to them, with Shakspere barred, whether Nash, Peele or Marlowe be

named, the least of whom was worthy of Chettle's commendation?

There is not a crumb of evidence adduced for Shakspere as a putative author of plays until 1598, and then only in the variable and shadowy Elizabethan title page. Chettle terms Greene "the only "comedian of a vulgar writer," meaning he was a writer in the vernacular tongue or common language, a fact which proves Shakspere's nihility as playmaker in 1592. Now the fact of the matter is that this "lying pamphlet," so called by Nash, was not authored by Greene. It should be called, "Chettle's Groats Worth of "Wit," for the pamphlet proper is from his pen or some other hack writer's. The letter alone was authored by Greene, addressed as a private letter to three fellow poets, and surreptitiously procured for Chettle and transcribed by him. Chettle writes, "I had only in the copy this "share—it was ill written—licensed it "must be, ere it could be printed, which "could never be if it might not be read.

"To be brief I writ it over and as nearly "as I could follow the copy. Only, in that "letter I put something out, but in the "whole book, not a word in, for I protest "it was all Greene's, not mine, nor Mas- "ter Nash's, as some unjustly have af- "firmed."

The letter and pamphlet both in Greene's handwriting would have been the best possible evidence of the genuineness of its contents and legibility. Chettle's not offering in evidence the original letter is strong presumptive proof of the commission of a forgery. He, if not the chief actor in the offense, was an accessory after the fact, and should, in his appeal to the public in defense of his reputation, have brought forward the pamphlet itself, embracing the whole matter, for examination and comparison; for we feel satisfied that such an examination would prove that the celebrated letter was authored and in the handwriting of Robert Greene, and not so ill written that it could not be read by the printers, who

must have been familiar with the handwriting of the largest contributor of the prose literature of his day. For ourselves, what we have adduced convinces us that the tract, "Groats Worth of Wit," was authored and written by one of Philip Henslowe's hacks, presumedly, Henry Chettle, a literary dead beat, and an indigent of many imprisonments, who was always importuning the old playbroker for money. Since the tract, "Groats Worth of Wit," was in Chettle's own handwriting, he strove to fool the printers by transcribing Greene's letter and binding both together, through that "disguised hood" to fool the public. Abraham Lincoln is reputed to have said, "You may fool all the people some of the "time, and some of the people all the "time, but you cannot fool all the people "all of the time." It is possible that Chettle may have fooled some of the people of his own generation some of the time, but in later times, through the misapprehension of his quoted words, he has

fooled the Shaksperolators all of the time. Chettle, however, would not permit the letter to come forward in its integrity and speak for itself, disclosing the nature of the intolerable something "stroke "out," which piques our curiosity, but not in anticipation of any of those indecencies that taint the writings of Ben Jonson and the work of many writers of that age, not excepting Shakespeare, who is also amenable in no slight degree to the charge of the same coarseness of taste which excites repulsion in the feelings of Leo Tolstoy.

The fact of the whole matter appears to be that Henry Chettle, wishing to profit financially by the great commercial value of Robert Greene's name, was accessory to the embezzlement and the commission of a forgery, and was the silent beneficiary of the fraud. The mutual connection of hack writer and pirate publisher is so obvious that a jury of discerning students, with the exhibits, presented together with the presumptive proofs and

inferential evidence contextured in both letter and preface, should easily confirm our opinion of the incredibleness of Chettle's statements contained in the preface to "Kind Hearts Dreams." The evidence of their falsity is, *prima-facie,* destitute of credible attestations.

We are made to see, in our survey of the age of Elizabeth, much that is in striking contrast with the spirit and activities of our time. There is a notable contrast between the public play house of those days, where no respectable woman ever appeared, and with the theatre of our day—the rival of the church as a moral force. In the elder time "the per-"manent and persistent dishonor at-"tached to the stage," and the stigma attached to the poets who wrote for the public playhouse, attached in like manner to the regular frequenters of public theatres, the majority of whom could neither read nor write, but belonged chiefly to the vicious and idle class of the population. At all the theatres, accord-

ing to Malone, it appears that noise and show were what chiefly attracted an audience in spite of the reputed author. There was clamor for a stage reeking with blood and anything ministering to their unchaste appetites. The spectacular actor and clown was relatively advantaged, as he could say much more than was set down for him. Kemp's extemporizing powers of histrionic buffoonery, gagging, and grimacing, paid the running expenses of the playhouse.

"It must be borne in mind that actors "then occupied an inferior position in "society, and that in many quarters even "the vocation of a dramatic writer was "considered scarcely respectable." Ben Jonson's letter to the Earl of Salisbury, lets us see very clearly that he regarded playwriting as a degradation. We transcribe it in part as follows:

> "I am here, my honored Lord, unex-
> "amined and unheard, committed to a
> "vile prison and with me a gentleman
> "(whose name may perhaps have come

"to your Lordship), one Mr. George
"Chapman, a learned and honest man.
"The cause (would I could name some
"worthier though I wish we had known
"none worthy our imprisonment) (is
"the words irk-me that our fortune
"hath necessitated us to so despise a
"course) a play, my Lord—."

We see how keenly Jonson felt the disgrace, not on account of the charge of reflecting on some one in a play in which they had federated, for he protested his own and Chapman's innocence, but he felt that their degradation lay chiefly in writing stage poetry, for drama-making was regarded as a degrading kind of employment, which poets accepted who were struggling for the meanest necessities of life, and were driven by poverty to their production, and to the slave-driving play-brokers, many of whom became very rich by making the flesh and blood of poor play-writers their maw.

In looking into Philip Henslowe's old note-book, we see how the grasping play-

brokers of the olden time speculated on the poor play-writers necessities, when plays were not regarded as literature; when the most strenuous and laborious of dramatic writers for the theatre could not hope to gain a competence by the pen alone, but wrote only for bread; when play-writers were in the employ of the shareholding actors, as hired men; and when their employers, the actors, were social outcasts who, in order to escape the penalty for the infraction of the law against vagabondage, were nominally retained by some nobleman. In further proof of the degradation which was attached to the production of dramatic composition, "when Sir Thomas Bodley, "about the year 1600, extended and re-"modeled the old university library and "gave it his name, he declared that no "such riff-raff as play-books should ever "find admittance to it." "When Ben "Jonson treated his plays as literature "by publishing them in 1616 as his works, "he was ridiculed for his pretentions,

"while Webster's care in the printing of
"his plays laid himself open to the charge
"of pedantry."

V

What Lord Rosebery says of Napoleon is equally true of the author of "Ham-"let" and "King Lear," "Mankind will "always delight to scrutinize something "that indefinitely raises its conception of "its own powers and possibilities, and "will seek, though eternally in vain, to "penetrate the secrets of this prodigious "intellect," and it is to Stratford-on-Avon that many turn for the final glimpse of what Swinburne calls "the most tran-"scendent intelligence that ever illumi-"nated humanity." William Shakspere, the third child and eldest son (probably), of John Shakspere, is supposed to have been born at a place on the chief highway or road leading from London to Ireland, where the road crosses the river Avon. This crossing was called Street-ford or Stratford. This, at any rate, was the place of his baptism in 1564, as is evidenced by the parish register. The next

proven fact is that of his marriage in 1582, when he was little more than eighteen years old. Before this event nothing is known in regard to him.

John Shakspere, the father apparently of William Shakspere, is first discovered and described as a resident of Henley Street, where our first glimpse is had of him in April, 1552. In that year he was fined the sum of twelve pence for a breach of the municipal sanitary regulations. Nothing is known in regard to the place of his birth and nurture, nor in regard to his ancestry. The evidence is, *prima-facie,* that the Shaksperes were of the parvenu class. John Shakspere seems to have been a chapman, trading in farmer's produce. In 1557 he married Mary Arden, the seventh and youngest daughter of Robert Arden, who had left to her fifty-three acres and a house, called "Ashbies" at Wilmecote. He had also left to her other land at Wilmecote, and an interest in two houses at Smitterfield.

This step gave John Shakspere a reputation among his neighbors of having married an heiress, and he was not slow to take advantage of it. His official career commenced at once by his election in 1557, as one of the ale-tasters, to see to the quality of bread and ale; and again in 1568 he was made high bailiff of Stratford. John Shakspere was the only member of the Shakspere family who was honored with civic preferment and confidence, serving the corporation for the ninth time in several functions. However, the time of his declination was at hand, for in the autumn of 1578 the wife's property at Ashbies was mortgaged for forty pounds. The money subsequently tendered in repayment of the loan was refused until other sums due to the same creditor were repaid. John Shakspere was deprived of his aldermanship September 6, 1580, because he did not come to the hall when notified. On March 29, he produced a writ of habeas corpus, which shows he had been in

prison for debt. Notwithstanding his inability to read and write, he had more or less capacity for official business, but so managed his private affairs as to wreck his own and his wife's fortune.

At the time of the habeas corpus matter William Shakspere was thirteen years old. "In all probability," says his biographer, "the lad was removed from "school, his father requiring his assist- "ance." There was a grammar school in Stratford which was reconstructed on a medieval foundation by Edward VI, though the first English grammar was not published until 1586. This was after Shakespere had finished his education. "No Stratford record nor Stratford tra- "dition says that Shakspere attended the "Stratford grammar school." But, had the waning fortune of his father made it possible, he might have been a student there from his seventh year—the probable age of admission—until his improvident marriage when little more than eighteen and a half years old. However, a

provincial grammar school is a convenient place for the lad about whose activities we know nothing, and whose education is made to impinge on conjecture and fanciful might-have-been.

We are told that Shakspere must have been sent to the free school at Stratford, as his parents and all the relatives were unlearned persons, and there was no other public education available; nevertheless, it was the practice of that age to teach the boy no more than his father knew. One thing is certain, that the scholastic awakening in the Shakspere family was of short duration, for it began and ended with William Shakspere. His youngest daughter, Judith, was as illiterate as were her grandparents. She could not even write her name, although her father at the time of her school age had become wealthy, and his eldest daughter "the little premature Susanna," as De Quincy calls her, could barely scrawl her name, being unable to identify her husband's (Dr. Hall) handwriting, which no

one but an illiterate could mistake. Her contention with the army surgeon, Dr. James Cook, respecting her husband's manuscripts, is proof that William Shakspere was true to his antecedents by conferring illiteracy upon his daughters. The Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon was not exceptionally liberal and broad minded in the matter of education in contrast with many of his contemporaries, notably Richard Mulcaster, (1531-1611), who says that "the girl should be as well "educated as her brother," while the real author of the immortal plays had also written, "Ignorance is the curse of God," and, "There is no darkness but ignor- "ance."

It was not the least of John Shakspere's misfortunes that in November, 1582, his eldest son, William, added to his embarrassments, by premature and forced marriage. It is the practice of Shakespere's biographers to pass hurriedly over this event in the young man's life, for there is nothing commendable in

his marital relations. There is expressed in it irregularity of conduct and probable desertion on his part; pressure was brought to bear on the young man by his wife's relations, and he was forced to marry the woman whom he had wronged. Who can believe that their marriage was a happy one, when the only written words contained in his will are not words expressive of connubial endearment, such as "dear wife" or "sweet wife," but "my "wife?" He had forgotten her, but by an interlineation in the final draft, she received his second best bed with its furniture. This was the sole bequest made to her.

We are by no means sure of the identity of his wife. We do not know that she and Shakespere ever went through the actual ceremony of marriage, unless her identity is traceable through Anne Wateley, as a regular license was issued for the marriage of William Shaxpere and Anne Wateley of Temple Grafton, November 27, 1583. Richard Hathaway,

the reputed father of Shakspere's wife, Anne, in his will dated September 1, 1581, bequeathed his property to seven children, his daughters being Catherin, Margaret and Agnes. No Anne was mentioned. The first published notice of the name of William Shakspere's (supposed) wife appears in Rowe's "Life of Shakes-"pere" (1709), wherein it is stated that she "was the daughter of one Hathaway "said to have been a substantial yeoman "in the neighborhood of Stratford." This was all that Betterton, the actor Rowe's informant, could learn at the time of his visit to Stratford-on-Avon. The exact time of this visit is unknown, but it was probably about the year 1690. This lack of knowledge in regard to the Hathaways shows that the locality of Anne Hathaway's residence, or that of her parents, was not known at Stratford. The house at Shottery, now known as Anne Hathaway's cottage, and reached from Stratford by fieldpaths, may have been the home of Anne Hathaway, wife

of William Shakspere, before his marriage, but of this there is no proof.

Shakspere was married under the name "Shagspere," but the place of marriage is unknown, as his place of residence is not mentioned in the bond. In the registry of the bishop of the diocese (Worcester) is contained a deed wherein Sandells and Richardson, husbandmen of Stratford, bound themselves in the bishop's consistory court on November 28, 1582, as a surety for forty pounds, to free the bishop of all liability should any lawful impediment, by reason of any precontract, or consanguinity, be subsequently disclosed to imperil the validity of the contemplated marriage of William Shakspere with Anne Hathaway. Provided, that Anne obtained the consent of her friends, the marriage might proceed with at once proclaiming the bans of matrimony. The wording of the bond shows that, despite the fact that the bridegroom was a minor by nearly three years, the consent of his parents was neither called

for, nor obtained, though necessary "for "strictly regular procedure." Sandells and Richardson, representing the lady's family, ignored the bridegroom's family completely. In having secured the deed, they forced Shakspere to marry their friend's daughter in order to save her reputation. Soon afterwards—within six months—a daughter was born. Moreover, the whole circumstances of the case render it highly probable that Shakspere had no thought of marriage, for the waning fortune of his father had made him acquainted with the "cares of bread." He was a penniless youth, not yet of age, having neither trade, nor means of livelihood, and was forced by her friends into marrying her—a woman eight years older than himself. In 1585 she presented him with twins.

When he left Stratford for London we do not know positively, but the advent of the twins is the approximate date of the youth's Hegira. He lived apart from his wife for more than twenty-five years.

The breath of slander never touched the good name of Anne (or Agnes), the neglected wife of William Shakspere. There is *prima-facie* evidence that the playbroker's wife fared in his absence no better than his father and mother, who, dying intestate in 1601 and 1608, respectively, were buried somewhere by the Stratford church, but there is no trace of any sepulchral monument, or memorial. If anything of the kind had been set up by their wealthy son, William Shakspere, it would certainly have been found by someone. The only contemporary mention made of the wife of Shakspere, between her marriage in 1582 and her husband's death in 1616, was as the borrower, at an unascertained date, of forty shillings from Thomas Whittington, who had formerly been her father's shepherd. The money was unpaid when Whittington died in 1601, and his executor was directed to recover the sum from Shakspere and distribute it among the poor of Stratford. There is disclosed in this pecuniary

transaction, coupled with the slight mention of her in the will and the barring of her dower, *prima facie* evidence of William Shakspere's indifference to, and neglect of, if not dislike for, his wife. All this is in striking contrast with the conduct of Sir Thomas Lucy, whom the biographers of Shakespere have attempted to disparage, and whose endearment for his wife is so feelingly expressed in his will. And, in contrast also, is the conduct of Edward Alleyn, famous as an actor, and as the founder of Dulwich College, who lived with his wife in London, and called her "sweet mouse."

The tangibility of this Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon is very much in evidence along pecuniary lines, especially as money lender, land-owner, speculator and litigant. In 1597 he bought New Place in Stratford for sixty pounds; also mentioned as a holder of grain at Stratford X quarters. The following entry is in Chamberlain's accounts at Stratford in 1598: "Paid to Mr. Shaxpere for one

"lode of stone xd;" in the same year Richard Quiney wrote to William Shakspere for a loan of thirty or forty pounds; in 1599 William Shakspere was taken into the new Globe Theatre Company as partner; in 1602 Shakspere bought one hundred seven acres of arable land at Stratford for three hundred two pounds (in his absence the conveyance was given over to his brother, Gilbert); in the same year he bought a house with barns, orchards, and gardens, from Hercules Underhill for sixty pounds; also a cottage close to his house, New Place; in 1605 Shakspere bought the thirty-two-year lease of half Stratford tithes for four hundred forty pounds; in 1613 Shakspere bought a house near Blackfriars' Theatre for one hundred and forty pounds, and mortgaged it next day for sixty pounds; in 1612 Shakspere is mentioned in a law suit brought before Lord Ellsimore about Stratford tithes; in 1611 Hamnet, his only son, died at Stratford at the age of eleven and half years. The

father, however, set up no stone to tell where the boy lay.

In the autumn of the year 1614 Shakspere became implicated with the landowners, William Combe and Arthur Mannering, in the conspiracy to enclose the common field in the vicinity of Stratford. The success of this rapacious scheme would have advantaged Shakspere in his freehold interest, but might have affected adversely his interest in the tithes, so he secured himself against all possible loss by obtaining from Riplingham, Combe's agent, in October, 1614, a deed of indemnification; then, in the spirit of his agreement, he acted in unison with the two greedy land-sharks to rob the poor people of their ancient rights of pasturage. The unholy coalition caused great excitement. The humble citizens of Stratford were thoroughly aroused, and the town corporation put up a sharp and vigorous opposition to the scheme, for enclosure would have caused decay of tillage, idleness, penury, depopulation, and the subversion

of homes. Happily, the three greedy cormorants Combe, Mannering and Shakspere failed in their efforts and the common field was unenclosed.

Shakspere is thought to have been penurious for his litigious strivings point in that direction, but this feature of his character was not disclosed in 1596 and 1599, when he sought to have his family enrolled among the gentry, as shown by his extravagance in bribing the officers of the Herald College to issue a grant of arms to his father, "a transaction which "involved," says Dr. Farmer, "the false- "hood and venality of the father, the son "and two kings-at-arms, and did not es- "cape protest, for if ever a coat was cut "from whole cloth we may be sure that "this coat-of-arms was the one." Shakspere himself was not in a position to apply for a coat-of-arms—"a player stood "far too low in the social scale for the "cognizance of heraldry." Nevertheless, recent writers on the subject of Shakespeare stamp this bogus coat-of-arms on

the covers of their books. We know that the Shaksperes did not belong to the Armigerous part of the population, and that they stood somewhat lower in the social scale than either the Halls or Quineys, who bore marital relations with them.

Shakspere's son-in-law, John Hall, was a master of arts and an eminent physician. He was summoned more than once to attend the Earl and Countess of Northampton at Ludlow Castle. He was of the French Court School, and was opposed to the indiscriminate process of bleeding. On June 5, 1607, Dr. Hall was married at Stratford-on-Avon to Shakspere's eldest daughter, Susanna. Stratford then contained about fifteen hundred inhabitants. One hundred sixty-two years later, Garrick gave his unsavory description of Stratford-on-Avon as "the "most dirty, unseemly, ill-paved, wretch-"ed-looking town in all Britain." Cottages of that day in Stratford consisted of mud walls and thatched roofs. "At

"this period and for many generations "afterwards the sanitary conditions of "the thoroughfares of Stratford-on-Avon "were simply terrible."

On February 10, 1616, Thomas Quiney, a vintner, and also an accomplished scholar and penman, was married at Stratford church to Judith, Shakspere's younger daughter, who could neither read nor write. The marriage ceremony took place without a license or proclaiming the bans. For this breach of ecclesiastical procedure both the parties were summoned to the court at Worcester and threatened with excommunication. When the fortune hunter goes forth to woe, and is determined to win, he is content to wade through reeking refuse and muck-heaps to marry a rich heiress and does not much care if her histrionic father by XXXIX Elizabeth were a vagabond.

If "there is a soul of truth in things "erroneous," so there may be a soul of truth in the creditableness of the Shakspere traditions, for in them are revealed

the environment in which they had their genesis, and the character of the inventor or fabricator. All of the traditions are comparatively recent or modern, and were made current by people who were, with few exceptions, coarse and densely ignorant. These apocryphal accounts serve to show also how little educated people knew, or cared, about writing with literary or historical accuracy when Shakspere was the subject. Unfortunately all of the traditions about Shakspere are of a degrading character.

The poaching escapade of his having robbed a park is one of the invented stories of fancy-mongers. There is very little likelihood that the young husband, with a wife and three babies to support, would voluntarily place himself in a position where he would have to flee from Sir Thomas Lucy's prosecution; thereby degrading the lowermost rank of life by bringing disgrace upon himself, his wife and children, while his parents in straitened circumstances were struggling to

keep the wolf from the door. The records show that Sir Thomas Lucy had no park either at Charlecote or Fulbroke, still the Lucys of a later day were not anxious to lose the honor of having spanked Shakspere for poaching on the ancestral preserves.

England was called in those days "The "toper's paradise," and tradition informs us that Shakspere was one of the Bedford topers. However, we should not infer from this that William Shakspere, a firm man of business, was at any time a drunken sot. The only story recorded during Shakspere's life is contained in John Manningham's note-book. It savors strongly of the tavern, the diarist criminating Shakspere's morals. This entry was made on March 13, 1601, the reference being to player Shakspere.

No wonder that such eminent votaries of Shakspere as Stevens, Hallam, Dyce and Emerson are disappointed and perplexed, for, while the record concerning the life of the player, money-lender, land-

owner, play-broker, speculator and litigant are ample, they disclose nothing of a literary character; but the pecuniary litigation evidence, growing out of Shakspere's devotion to money-getting in London and Stratford, does unfold his true life and character. The records do not furnish a single instance of friendship, kindness or generosity, but upon the delinquent borrower of money he rigidly evoked the law, which gave a generous advantage to the creditor, and its vile prison to the debtor.

In 1600 Shakspere brought action against John Clayton for seven pounds and got judgment in his favor. He sued Philip Rogers, a neighbor in Stratford Court, for one pound, fifteen shillings and six pence due for malt sold, and two shillings loaned. In August, 1608, Shakspere prosecuted John Addenbroke to recover a debt of six pounds. He prosecuted this last suit for a couple of years until he got the defendant into prison. The prisoner was bailed out by Horneby.

Addenbroke, running away, escaped from the clutches of his tormentor, who then bore down on his security, Horneby.

"The pursuit of an impoverished man "for the sake of imprisoning him, and "depriving him both of the power of pay- "ing his debts and supporting his family, "grate upon our feelings," says Richard Grant White, "and," adds this eminent Shakspearean, "we hunger and we receive "these husks, we open our mouths for "food and we break our teeth against "these stones." We may be sure that there was left in the impoverished home of John Addenbroke little more palatable than husks and stones, when the father fled to escape from the clutches of his insistent creditor, William Shakspere of Stratford.

The paltry suits he brought to recover debts do not tend to disclose this Shakspere's "radiant temperament," or fit him to receive the adjective, "gentle," except in contumely for his claim to gentility. It is not known that Shakspere

ever gave hospitality to the necessities of the poor of his native shire, for whom, it appears, there beat no pulse of tenderness. A man of scanty sensibilities he must have been. The poor working people of Stratford, we may be sure, shed no tear at this Shakspere's departure from the world.

We do not envy the man, who can regard these harsh pecuniary practices in this Shakspere, as commendable traits of his worldly wisdom, for he was shrewd in money matters, and could have invested his money in London and Stratford so as not to have brought sorrow and distress upon his poor neighbors. These matters are small in themselves, but they suggest a good deal, for they bear witness to sorrow-stricken mothers, hungry children and fathers in loathsome prisons, powerless to provide food, warmth and light for the home. The diary, or note-book, of Philip Henslowe, the theatrical manager and play-broker, shows that Henslowe was himself a very

penurious and grasping man, who, taking advantage of starving play-makers' necessities, became very wealthy. William Shakspere, of Stratford-on-Avon, as a theatrical manager, became rich also, but his note-book has not been preserved, so nothing is known of his business methods in dealing with the poor play-makers; but the literary antiquarians, by ramsacking corporations' records and other public archives, have proven that Shakspere was very much such a man as the old pawnbroker and play-broker, Philip Henslowe, of a rival house.

The biographers should record these facts, and not strive to shun them, for the literary antiquaries have unearthed and brought them forward, and they tell the true story of Shakspere's life, though we do not linger lovingly over them, for, like Hallam, "we as little feel the power of "identifying the young man who came up "from Stratford, was afterward an in- "different player in a London theatre, "and retired to his native place in middle

"life, with the author of 'Macbeth' and "'Lear,'" for the Stratford records are as barren of literary matter as the lodgings in Silver street, London. Not a crumb for the literary biographer in either place!

Professor Wallace has added another non-literary document in the matter of Shakspere's deposition in the case of Bellot vs. Mountjoy, which he discovered in the public record office, but it in no way contributes to a literary biography. The truth is that, with all their industry, the antiquarians have in this regard not brought to light a single proven fact to sustain the claim that this Shakespere was either the author of poems or plays. This bit of new knowledge gives us a glimpse of this William Shakspere as an evasive witness, having a conveniently short memory. These depositions disclose his intermediation in the matter of making two hearts happy, but not the faintest glimpse of the author of poems or plays. When the claim of authorship

is challenged, new particulars of the life of Shakspere, such as this and others that have been unearthed by antiquarians, whether in the public record office or corporation archives, are alike worthless so far as establishing the poet Shakspere's identity. They fail to confirm the identity of the actor Shakspere with the author of the plays and poems that are associated with his name. There are no family traditions, no books, manuscripts, or letters, addressed to him, or by him, to poet, peer or peasant. The credible evidence supplied by contemporaneous, or antiquarian, research do not identify the player and landowner with the author of "Hamlet," "Lear" and "Othello."

Our belief in the pseudonymity of the author of the poems and plays, called Shakespeare, is strengthened by the absence of verse commemorative of concurrent events, such as the strivings of his boldest countrymen in the great Elizabethan age. There is, from his pen, neither word of cheer, nor sympathy, with

the daring and suffering warriors and adventurers of that time, although his contemporaries versified eulogies to the heroes of those days for their stirring deeds. There is, in the poems and plays, no elegiac lay in memory of Elizabeth, "the glorious daughter of the illustrious "Henry," as Robert Greene calls her, nor is there one line of mourning verse at the death of Prince Henry, the noblest among the children of the king, by a writer who was always a strenuous and consistent supporter of prerogative against the conception of freedom. This is another evidence of the secrecy maintained as to the authorship of the poems and plays. We cannot discover a single laudatory poem or commendatory verse, or a line of praise of any publication, or writer of his time. All this is in contrast with his contemporaries, whose personalities are identifiable with their literary work, and, so liberal of commendation were they, that they literally showered commendatory verses on literary works of merit, or those

thought to have merit. Of these, thirty-five were bestowed on Fletcher, a score or more on Beaumont, Chapman and Ford, while Massinger received nineteen. Ben Jonson's published works contain thirty-seven pieces of commendation. His Roman tragedy, "Sejanus," was acclaimed by ten contemporary poets. In praise of his comedy, "Volpone," There are seven poems. The versified compliments bestowed on him by his fellow craftsmen embrace many of the most celebrated names antecedent to his death, which occurred in 1637. Early in 1638 a collection of some thirty elegies were published under the title of "Jonsonus Virbius," or "The Memory of Ben Jonson," in which nearly all the leading poets of the day, except Milton, took part.

It must appear strange to the votaries of Shakspere that Jonson should have received so many crowns of mourning verse, while for Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon, the reputed author of "Hamlet," "Lear" and "Macbeth," there

wailed no dirge. Not a single commendatory verse was bestowed by a contemporary poet antecedent to his death, nor was a single elegaic poem written of him in the year of his death, 1616. Already in that fatal year there had been mourning for Francis Beaumont, who received immediate posthumous honors by many poets, in memorial odes, sighing forth the requiem to his name in mournful elegy.

Eight and forty days after the death of Francis Beaumont, all that was mortal of William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon was buried in the chancel of his parish church, in which, as part owner of the tithes and consequently one of the lay rectors, he had the right of interment. Over the spot where his body was laid, there was placed a slab with the inscription imprecating a curse on the man who should disturb his bones,

"Good friend, for Jesus sake forbeare
"To digg the dust enclosed here
"Bless be ye man yt spares this stown
"And curst be he yt moves my bones."

This rude, absurd and ignorant epitaph has given much trouble to writers on the subject of Shakespeare. The usual explanation of the threat is given that the Puritans thought that the church had been profaned by the ashes of an actor. These ignorant words could not have been written as a deterrent to the Puritans, for they did not belong to the ignorant section of the population, but to the middle class, nor would they have been deterred from invading Shakspere's tomb by the superstitious fear of a threat contained in doggerel verse cut on the tomb. There was not the least danger that the actor's grave would be violated by the Puritans, for Dr. John Hall, Shakspere's son-in-law, was a Puritan. If he had had this warning epitaph cut on the tomb it would have been written in scholarly English. The doggerel lines, rude as they are, satisfied, doubtless, the widow and daughters, themselves ignorant. The most pleasing epitaph, it seems to us, would have been one expressing a

known wish of their "dear departed" in words, when read by others, that would best suit their understandings, for the Shakspere family were uncultured. They could not read the stupid epitaph on his tomb, and so their hearts were not saddened as they gazed upon an inscription of barbaric rudeness.

Some slight circumstance may have given rise to William Hall's conjecture, during his visit to Stratford, in 1694, that Shakspere authored his own epitaph, and that these lines were written to suit the capacity of clerks and sextons, who, according to Hall, in course of time would have removed Shakspere's dust to the bone house. This is not improbable from the point of view taken by those who believe that Shakspere of Stratford wrote the doggerel epigram on John Combe, money lender, and the vituperative ballad abusing the gentleman whose park he (Shakspere) robbed, for the three compositions are of the same grade of ignorant nonsense. But we do know that

had the author of "Hamlet" written his own epitaph, it would have been as deathless as the one over the Countess of Pembroke:

"Underneath this sable hearst
"Lies the subject of all verse
"Sidney's sister—Pembroke's mother
"Death, ere thou hast slain another
"Learned and fair and good as she
"Time shall throw a dart at thee."

It should be borne in mind that clerks and sextons were not the only ignorant people in and about Stratford. There were some that had a grievance, or thought they had, which parish clerks and sextons had not. We have reference to the poor debtors, who regarded Shakspere of Stratford as a grasping usurer, hard upon poor people in his power, so the curse inscribed slab was placed over Shakspere's grave as a shield to protect his ashes from those who would not hesitate to invade the tomb of one whose memory had become hateful to them. If in pressing his claim the money lender

elects to be a tormentor, his name will be execrated while living and a hateful memory when dead.

One thing is evidenced by the maledictory epitaph; that the one who wrote it was afraid the tomb might be violated by the removal of the bones to the charnal house. Who were they that would most likely invade Shakspere's tomb? Obviously those, we repeat, who regarded him as a hard-hearted man, who pressed poor debtors with all the rigor of the law to enforce the payment of petty sums; the man who had shown himself supremely selfish in an attempt to enclose the Stratford common field; the man who would be made "a gentleman" by misrepresentation, fraud and falsehood. The foregoing facts, and the legal and municipal evidence bound up in dusty records, a bogus coat-of-arms, and a rude epitaph, tell the true story of the life of William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon.

There is no record of any pretended living likeness of Shakspere better rep-

resenting him than the Stratford bust. This bust is erected on the north side of the chancel of Holy Trinity Church at Stratford-on-Avon. On the floor of the chancel in front of the monument are the graves of Shakspere and his family. We have no means of ascertaining when the monument and bust were erected. The first folio edition of his reputed works was published in 1623. It contained words from Leonard Diggs prefatory lines "and time dissolves thy Stratford moniment," monument being used interchangeably with tomb; but these words do not prove that the bust was set up before 1623. His image was rudely cut, sensual and clownish in appearance.

There is not a tittle of evidence adduced to show that a knowledge of Shakspere's putative authorship of poems and plays was current at Stratford when the first folio edition of his reputed works was published in 1623. The records attest that Shakspere's fame reputatively as writer is posterior to this event. How

strange it must seem to those who claim for Shakspere an established reputation as poet and dramatist of repute anterior to the first folio edition in 1623, that Dr. Hall, himself an author and most advantaged of all the heirs by Shakspere's death, should fail to mention his father-in-law in his "cure-book" or observations! The earliest dated cure is 1617, the year following Shakspere's death, but there are undated ones. In "Obs. XIX." Hall mentions without date an illness of his wife, Mrs. Hall; and we find him making a note long afterwards in reference to his only daughter, Elizabeth, who was saved by her father's skill and patience. "Thus was she delivered from "death and deadly diseases and was well "for many years." The illness of Drayton is recorded without date in "Obs. XXII.," with its wee bit of a literary biography, and he is referred to as "Mr. Drayton, an excellent poet." Had Shakspere received a like mention as a poet or writer by one who knew him so intimately,

what a delicious morsel it would have been to all those who have followed the literary antiquarian through the dreary barren waste of Shakespearean research. We have found nothing but husks, and these, eulogists of Shakespeare—Hallam, Stevens and Emerson—refused to crunch! For nearly three centuries the Stratford archives have contained all matters concerning Shakspere's life and character, and have given us full knowledge of the man; nothing has been lost; but of his alleged literary life, there is not a crumb, no family traditions, no books, no manuscripts, no letters, no commendatory verses, plays, masques or anthology.

The biographers of Shakespeare have none of the material out of which poets and dramatists are made, but only those facts which are congruous with money lenders, land speculators, play-brokers and actors; also, a good assortment of apocryphal stores and gossipy yarns which have become traditional currency. According to Mark Twain there is some-

thing more. He says, "When we find a "vague file of chipmunk tracks stringing "through the dusk of Stratford village "we know that Hercules has been "along." Again he proceeds, "The bust, "too, there in the Stratford church, the "precious bust, the calm bust with a dandy "mustache, and the putty face unseamed "with care—that face which has looked "passionlessly down upon the awed pil- "grim for a hundred and fifty years, and "will look down upon the awed pilgrim "three hundred more with the deep, deep, "deep, subtle, subtle, subtle expression of "a bladder."

Not having found the slightest trace of Shakespeare in 1592 as writer of plays, or as adapter or elaborator of other men's work, his advent into literature must have been at a later date, if at all. In 1593 "Venus and Adonis" appeared in print with a dedication to Lord Southampton, and signed "William Shakespeare." In 1594 appeared another poem, "Lucrece," also with a dedication to Lord

Southampton. The poems bore no name of an author on the title page. Here is literary tangibility, but does it establish the identity of their author, or attest the responsibility of the young Stratford man for the poems which were published under the name of Shakespeare? This was the first mention of the now famous name? Was it a pseudonym, or was it the true name of the author of the poem? The enthusiastic reception of the poems awakens a suspicion when we learn that their popularity was due to a belief in their lasciviency; and that the dedicatee was the rakish Henry Worthesley, third Earle of Southampton; and, furthermore, that the name of the dedicator, "Shakespeare," was one of a class of nicknames which in 1593 still retained in some measure that which was derisive in them. In 1487 a student at Oxford changed his own name of "Shakespeare" into "Saunders," because he considered it too expressive and distinctive of rough manners, and significant of degradation, and as

such was unwilling to aid in its hereditary transmission, when all that is derisive in the name Shakspere remained fixed and fossilized in the old meaning. In those unlettered times, lascivious persons were sometimes branded, so to speak, with the nickname "Shakspere." Primarily, the name has no militant signification. There is no such personal name in any known list of British surnames. They are of the parvenu class without ancestry.

Mr. Sidney Lee admits that the Earle of Southampton is the only patron of Shakspere that is known to biographical research (p. 126). By what fact, or facts, may we ask, is the authenticity of the Earl's friendship or patronage attested? Southampton was the standing patron of all the poets, the stock-dedicatee of those days. It was the fashion of the times to pester him with dedications by poets grave and gay. They were after those five or six pounds, which custom constrained his Lordship to yield for

having his name enshrined in poet's lines. All the poets of that age were dependents, and there is, with few exceptions, the same display of pharisaic sycophancy, greediness, and on the part of dedicatee an inordinate desire for adulation. Every student of Elizabethan literature and history should know that the Southampton-Shakspere friendship cannot be traced biographically. The Earl of Southampton was a voluminous correspondent, but did not bear witness to his friendship for Shakspere. A scrutinous inspection of Southampton's papers contained in the archives of his family, descendants and contemporaries, yields nothing in support of the contention that Southampton's friendship, or patronage, is known to biographical research, and it is as attestative as that other apocryphal story preserved by Rowe "which is fast disappearing from Shakespearean biography."

"There is one instance so singular in "its munificence that if we had not been

"assured that the story was handed down "by Sir William Davenant, who was "probably very well acquainted with his "affairs, we should not venture to have "inserted that my Lord Southampton at "one time gave him (Shakspere) a thous- "and pounds, to enable him to go through "with a purchase which he heard he had "a mind to." (Davenant was the man who gave out that he was the natural son of Shakspere). A present of a thousand pounds which equals at least twenty-five thousand dollars to-day! The magnitude of the gift discredits the story nevertheless, the startled Rowe, is the first to make it current, but does not give his readers the ground for his assurance. Be it what it may, he could hardly satisfy the modern reader that this man, a son, who insinuatingly defiles the name and fair fame of his own mother, is a credible witness, or that such a man is "fit for wolf bait." What purchase did Shakspere "go through with?" Not New Place in 1597, for the purchase money was only

sixty pounds. Neither could it have been the Stratford estate in 1602, for at that time Southampton was a prisoner in the Tower. In fact, the whole sum expended by Shakspere did not amount to a thousand pounds in all. The truth is, the social Rules of Tudor and Jacobin times did not permit peer and peasant to live on terms of mutual good feeling. Almost all the poets in hope of gain, penned adulatory sonnets in praise of Lord Southampton. In those times they had a summary way of dealing with humble citizens. Jonson, Chapman and Marston, were imprisoned for having displeased the king by a jest in "Eastward Ho,"—

"A nobleman to vindicate rank brought "an action in the star-chamber against a "person, who had orally addressed him "as 'Goodman Morley.'" The literati of those days found in scholastic learning, neither potency, nor promise, to abrogate class distinctions by giving a passport to high attainment in literature, poetry and philosophy.

Ben Jonson says, "The time was when "men were had in price for learn-"ing, now letters only make men vile. He "is upbraidingly called a poet as if it "were a contemptible nickname."

Mr. Lee tells us, that the state papers and business correspondence of Southampton were enlivened by references to his literary interest and his sympathy with the birth of English Drama. (P. 316.). "However, Mr. Lee has extracted "no reference to Shakspere from the "paper." Southampton's zest for the theatre is based on the statement contained in the "Sidney Papers" that he and his friend Lord Rutland "come not to court but pass "away the time merely in going to plays "every day." When a new library for his old college, St. Johns, was in course of construction, Southampton collected books to the value of three hundred and sixty pounds wherewith to furnish it. Southampton's literary tastes and sympathy with the drama cannot be drawn

from his gift to the library, for it consisted largely of legends of the saints and mediaeval chronicles. When and where did William Shakspere acknowledge his obligations to the only patron of the player? According to Mr. Lee, who is known to biographical research, not one of the Shakespearean plays was dedicated to Southampton. The name "Shakspere" is conspicuously absent from among the distinguished writers of his day, who in panegyrical speech and song acclaimed Southampton's release from prison in 1602.

Francis Meres, a pedantic schoolmaster and Divinity student, had his "Pal-"ladin Tamia" registered September 7, 1598, and published shortly after. Meres in his "Tamia" writes of the mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare, and his "Venus and Adonis," and his "Lucrece," and his sugared sonnets to his friends, and enumerates twelve plays—though at the time three only had been published with his name. Like others of his con-

temporaries, Meres writes tritely of the honey-tongued, the honey sweet and the sugared. With him, everything written is mellifluent, but he says nothing of the man. In fact, no contemporary left on record any definite impression of Shakespeare's personal character. Meres asserted that Ben Jonson was one of our best poets for tragedy, when at that time (1598) Jonson had not written a single tragedy, and but one comedy.

Before, we transcribe, in part, "Wits "Treasury" by Francis Meres, we ask the readers' pardon for this abuse of their patience, for Meres merely repeats names of Greek, Latin and modern play-makers. "As these tragic poets flourished in "Greece—Aeschylus, Euripides" (in all seventeen are named and these among the Latin, Accius, M. Attilus, Seneca and several others). "So these are our best "for tragedy; the Lord Buckhurst, Dr. "Leg of Cambridge, Dr. Eds of Oxford, "Master Edward Ferris—the author of "the 'Merriour for Magistrates,'—Mar-

"lowe, Peele, Watson, Kyd, Shakespeare, "Drayton, Chapman, Decker and Benja- "min Jonson. The best poets for com- "edy"—(Meres proceeds with his enumeration, naming sixteen Greeks and ten Latins, twenty-six in all.) "So the best "for comedy amongst us be Edward, Earl "of Oxford; Dr. Lager of Oxford; Mas- "ter Rowley; Master Edwards: eloquent "and wittie John Lilly; Lodge; Gas- "coyne; Greene; Shakespeare; Thomas "Nash; Thomas Heywood; Anthony "Munday. Our best plotters: Chapman, "Porter, Wilson, Hathaway and Henry "Chettle."

Meres does not seem to have considered it necessary to read before reviewing. Had he done so he would not have placed the name of Lord Buckhurst first in his list, giving primacy to this mediocrist, and the author of "Romeo and Juliet," whoever he was, ninth in his list of dramatic poets which he considered best among the English for tragedy; nor, would he have named for second place on the list Dr.

Leg of Cambridge, instead of the author of "The Jew of Malta" (Marlowe). What has Dr. Eds of Oxford, whose name stands third in the Meres list, written that he should have been mentioned in the same connection with the author of "The "White Devil" (Webster) or the author of that classic "The Conspiracy," and "The Tragedy of Charles Duke of By-"ron" (Chapman)? Why this commingling of such insignificant writers as Edward, Earl of Oxford, Lord Buckhurst, Drs. Lager and Leg, with the giant brotherhood? The fact is, so far as attesting the responsibility of anybody or anything, the Meres averments are as worthless as "a musty nut." What was said of John Aubury is also true of Francis Meres, "His brain was like a hasty "pudding whose memory and judgment "and fancy were all stirred together." Yet this is the writer that many Shakespearean commentators confidently appeal to, in part, and whose testimony, in part, they, with equal unanimity impeach.

The slight mention of Shakespeare by the "judicious Webster," as Hazlet calls him, comprehends no more than that Shakspere was one of the hack writers of the day: "detraction is the sworn friend "to ignorance." For mine own part I have ever truly cherished "my good opin- "ion of other men's worthy labours, "especially of that full and heightened "style of Master Chapman, the laboured "and understanding works of Master "Jonson, the no less worthy composures "of the both worthily excellent Master "Beaumont and Fletcher, and lastly "(without wrong last to be named) the "right happy and copious industry of "Master Shakespeare, Master Dekker "and Master Heywood."

These words written by the third greatest of English tragic poets are very significant, for Webster wrote for the theatre to which Shakspere, the player and play-broker, belonged; yet industry is the only distinguishing mark in Shakspere which he must share with Dekker, and

Heywood, hack writers for the stage. Dekker's many plays attest his copious industry, when we remember that this writer spent three years in prison, and Heywood's industry cannot be doubted for he claimed to have had a hand and main finger in two hundred twenty plays. Copious industry signifies to the reader the existence of an author not utterly unknown, it is true, but it fails to identify him as the author of the immortal plays. What shall we say then? Were the works called Shakespeare's but little known? Shakspere's biographers say that they were the talk of the town. If that is true, then the writer who was commended for industry was not regarded by Webster as the author of "Hamlet," "Lear," and "Macbeth," for Shakespeare's distinctive characteristics are not individualized from those of Dekker and Heywood, while those of Chapman, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher are. In the last four named is perfect interlacement of per-

sonality with authorship, but not so in Shakespeare.

John Webster's judgment of his fellow craftsman was just, "I have ever truly "cherished my good opinion of other "men's worthy labours." Webster never conceals or misrepresents the truth by giving evasive, or equivocating, evidence. He reveals the judicial trait of his character in placing Chapman first among the poets then living, assuming that the name Shakespeare was used by printers and publishers, if not by writers, as an impersonal name, masking the name of a true poet. Sidney, Marlowe and Spencer had then descended to the tomb.

George Chapman's name has not received due prominence in the modern hand-books of English literature, but he was a bright torch and numbered by his own generation, among the greatest of its poets. He, whom Webster calls the "Prince's Sweet Homer" and "My "Friend," was not unduly honored by the "full and heightened style" which Web-

ster makes characteristic of him. "Our "Homer-Lucan," as he was gracefully termed by Daniel, is a poet much admired by great men. Edmund Waller never could read Chapman's Homer without a degree of transport. Barry is reputed to have said that when he went into the street after reading it, men seemed ten feet high; Coleridge declares Chapman's version of the Odyssey to be as truly an original poem as the "Faerie Queene." He also declares that Chapman in his moral heroic verse stands above Ben Jonson. "There is more dignity, more lustre, "and equal strength."

Translation was in those times a new force in literature. By the indomitable force and fire of genius Chapman has made Homer himself speak English by translating the genius, and by having chosen that which prefers the spirit to the letter. It is in his translation that the "Iliad" is best read as an English book. Out of it there comes a whiff of the breath of Homer. It is as massive

and majestic as Homer himself would have written in the land of the virgin queen. "He has added," says Swinburne, "a monument to the temple which con-"tains the glories of his native language, "the godlike images, and the costly relics "of the past." "The earnestness and "passion," says Charles Lamb, "which "he has put into every part of these po-"ems would be incredible to a reader of "mere modern translations. His almost "Greek zeal for the honor of his heroes "is only paralleled by that fierce spirit of "Hebrew bigotry with which Milton, as "if personating one of the zealots of the "old law, clothed himself when he sat "down to paint the acts of Samson "against the uncircumcised." It was the reflected Hellenic radiance of the grand old Chapman version to the lifted eyes of Keats flooded with the "light which "never was on sea or shore." This younger poet sang:

"Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,
"And many goodly states and kingdoms seen,
"Round many western islands have I been,
"Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold;
"Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
"That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne
"Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
"Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold."

The preface to Webster's tragedy, "The White Devil," which contains a slight mention of Shakespeare, was printed in 1612, after all the immortal plays were written and their reputed author had returned to Stratford, probably in 1611, in his forty-seventh year, where he lived idly for five years before his death. John Webster possessed a critical faculty and an independent judgment, but the way he makes mention of Shakespeare shows that he knew nothing

about the individual man, or the work, called Shakespeare.

The generous reference to "The la- "boured and understanding works of "Master Jonson" gives a clear idea of the main characteristics of the work of Jonson, who, not having reached the fruition of his renown in 1611, but in the after time, came into Dryden's view as "The "greatest man of the last age, the most "learned and judicious writer any thea- "tre ever had." John Webster writes of "the no less worthy composures of Beau- "mont and Fletcher" then in the morning of life. They present an admirable model for purity of vocabulary and simplicity of expression and were of "loud- "est fame." "Two of Beaumont's and "Fletcher's plays were acted to one of "Shakespeare's, or Ben Jonson's," in Dryden's time.

There is strong presumptive proof that printers and publishers in Elizabethan and Jacobin times were in the habit of selecting names or titles that would best

sell their books. The most popular books or best sellers they printed were books of songs, love-tales, comedies and sonnets of the amorous, scented kind, and it mattered not to publishers if the name printed on the title-page was a personal name, or one impersonal. Title-pages were not even presumptive proof of authorship in the time of Queen Elizabeth and King James. The printers chose to market their publications under the most favorable conditions, and some writers chose the incognizable name "Shakes-"peare" which had been attached to the voluptuous poem "Venus and Adonis." This was published by Richard Field, in whose name it had been entered in the Stationer's Register in 1593. There was no name of an author on the title-page, but the dedication was to the Earl of Southampton and was signed "William "Shakespeare." This was the first appearance of the name "Shakespeare" in literature, being the non-de-plume, doubtless, of the writer who gave this erotic

poem to the world—"The first heir of my "invention."

Not finding "Shakespeare" in the anthology of his day, the most natural inference would be that all those who wrote under the name "Shakespeare" wrote incognito. We know that Marlowe, Beaumont, Greene, Drayton and many writers of that age wrote anonymously for the Elizabethan stage. Many of the anonymous writings have been retrieved; much, doubtless, remains still to be reclaimed from the siftings of what are named Early Comedy, Early History, and Pre-Shakespearean Group of plays. Mr. Spedding had the good fortune to be the first to demonstrate the theory of a divided authorship of "Henry VIII.," to reclaim for Fletcher "Wolsey's Farewell "to all his Greatness." Thirteen out of the seventeen scenes of "Henry the "Eighth" are attributed by Mr. Lee (P. 212) to Fletcher. A majority of the best critics now agree with Miss Jane Lee, in the assignment of the second and third

part of Henry VI. to Marlowe, Greene and Peele.

The difficulty of identifying Shakespeare, the author poet, with the young man who came up from Stratford, has induced Shakespearean scholars to question the unity of authorship. Mr. Swinburne tells us that no scholar believes in the single authorship of "Andronicus." Mr. Lee admits that Shakespeare drew largely on the "Hamlet," which he has attributed to Kyd (P. 182). "It is "scarcely possible," says Mr. Marshall in the "Irving Shakespeare," "to maintain "that the play '(Hamlet)' referred to as "well known in 1589, could have been by "Shakspere—that is—by the young actor "from Stratford. Surely not. We see "the question of the unity of the author "and authorship involves the question of "his identity." It is evident that the author poet, whoever he was, had, in his time of initiation, "purloyned plumes" from Marlowe, Kyd and Greene, and, when nearing the close of his literary

career, according to Prof. A. H. Thorndike, he was a close imitator of John Fletcher—not so much an innovator as an adapter.

What do we know of Shakespeare, the author poet, "The Man in a Mask?" We know nothing, absolutely nothing. No reputed play by Shakespeare was published before 1597, and none bore the name Shakespeare on the title page till 1598. Lodge, in his prose satire "Wits "Misery," dated 1596, enumerates the wits of the time. Shakspere is not mentioned. Dr. Peter Heylys was born in 1600, and died in 1662, thus being sixteen years old when Shakspere, the player died. In reckoning up the famous dramatic poets of England he omits Shakspere. Ben Jonson, in the catalogue of writers, also omits Shakspere, and at a later date, writing on the instruction of youth and the best authors, he forgets all about Shakspere. Philip Henslow, the old play-broker, also in writing his notebook during the twelve years beginning

in February, 1591, does not even mention Shakspere. Milton's poem on Shakespeare (1630) was not published in his works in 1645. This epitaph was prefixed to the folio edition of Shakespeare (1632), but without Milton's name. It is the first of his reputed poems that was published. Its pedigree was not at all satisfactory. Milton, having been misled by Ben Jonson's lines on Shakespeare, "And though thou hadst small Latin and "less Greek," writes of

> "Sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
> Warbles his native woodnotes wild."

Milton's acquaintance with Shakespeare verse must have been very meager, for had he read "Venus and Adonis," so classic and formal, he would agree with Walter Savage Lander that "No poet was "ever less a warbler of woodnotes wild." It was never said in the original authorities that a Shakespeare play, or one by Shakspere, was played between 1594 and 1614. There were published in quarto

twenty-three plays in Shakespeare's name—twelve of which are not now accepted—and nine without his name. The folio (1623) is the sole original authority for seventeen plays, but five writers—four of them very inferior men—refer to Shakespeare, antecedent to the folio of 1623.

Search as we may, we fail to find the play-actor in affiliation with poets or scholars. How unlike the literary men of that age; for instance, George Chapman, who had been called the "blank of "his age," and not without reason for, in all that pertains to the poet's personal history, absolutely nothing is known in regard to his family, and very little of his own private life. Much, however, is known concerning Chapman's personal authorship of poems and plays for the list of passages extracted from his poems in "England's Parnassus" or the "Choic-"est Flowers of Our Modern Poets" contains no less than eighty-one. At the time of this publication (1600), he had pub-

lished but two plays and three poems. "The proud full sail of his great verse" (Chapman's Homer) had not at this time been unfurled.

At the time, this first English anthology was compiled and published, thirteen of the Shakespeare plays and two poems had been issued. Nevertheless Shakespeare does not figure in the anthology of his day. Why? The play-actor, William Shakspere, in his life time was not publicly credited with the personal authorship of the plays and poems called Shakespeare's, except possibly by three or four poeticules, Bomfield, Freeman, Meres, and Weaver, who followed each other in the iteration and reiteration of the same insipid and affected compliments, not one of them implying a personal acquaintance with the author. Some few persons may have believed that the player and play-wright were one and the same person, and were deceived into so believing. This much we do know, that the player Shakspere never openly sanc-

tioned the identification, although he may have been accessory to the deception. It should be borne in mind also that no poet was remembered in Shakspere's will, as were the actors.

Many writers of that age were communistic in the use of the name "Shakes-"peare" as a descriptive title, very much like the Italians' pantomime called "Sil-"verspear," standing for the collocuted works of not one, but several play-makers. Sir Thomas Brown complained that his name was being used to float books that he never wrote. In the list before us there are forty-nine plays which were published with Shakespeare's name. Doubtless there were many others; not one in fifty of the dramas of this period, according to Hallowell-Philips, having descended to modern times. Many writers of that age wrote anonymously and pseudonymously. Edmund Spencer, author of "The Shepherd's Calendar" remained incognito for seven years. Eight years after this work appeared George

Whitstone ascribed it to Philip Sidney and a cotemporary writer, mistaking Spencer's masking name for the author of the works. Spencer committed "The Faerie Queen" to the press after nine years. Only four of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays were published in Fletcher's lifetime and none of them bore Beaumont's name. Fletcher survived his partner nine years. Robert Burton, author of "The Anatomy of Melancholy," maintained his incognito for a time, he avers, because it gave him greater freedom. Jean Baptiste Popuelin preferred to be known as Moliere. Francais-Marie Aronet won enduring fame as Voltaire. Sir Walter Scott maintained his incognito as the great unknown for years like "Junius," "whose secret was intrusted to "no one and was never to be revealed." Sir Walter Scott preserved his secret until driven to the brink of financial destruction. Drayton also had written under the pseudonym of Rowland. Who can doubt that the author of "Hamlet,"

"Lear" and "Macbeth," chose to sheath his private life and personality as a man of letters in an impenetrable incognito—"the nothingness of a name."

Of the thirty-seven plays assigned by the folio of 1623, not one had received the acknowledgment of their reputed author (Shakespeare). Not a single line in verse or prose assented to for comparison and identification, and in the absence of credible evidence of his authorship of certain poems, there can be no authoritative sanction of the assignment.

No person writing on the subject of Shakespeare can write a literary life of the individual man, for player Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon does not offer a single point of correspondence to the activities of a literary man or scholar. The fantastical critics profess to read the story of the author's life in his works. This is an absurdity, for dramatic art is mainly character creation and cannot be made to disclose a knowledge of his private life. The artist is an observer and

paints the thing seen. He, himself, is not the thing which he depicts but he gives the character as it is. In the opinion of the present writer it is a waste of time to attempt to identify Shakspere, the play-actor, with any one of the dramatic personages contained in the plays called Shakespeare's.

Forty-six years after the death of William Shakspere of Stratford, Thomas Fuller in his "Worthies," published posthumously in 1662, wrote:

"Many were the wit-combats between "him and Ben Jonson, which two I be-"hold like a Spanish great galleon and an "English man-of-war."

Fuller being born in 1608, was only eight years old when player-Shakspere died, and but two when he quitted London. If this precocious youngster beheld the "wit-combats" of the two, he could only have beheld them as he lay "mewl-"ing and puking in his nurse's arms."

VI.

We have in conclusion decided to focus the interest of the reader chiefly in the attestation of Ben Jonson for the works which were associated with the name of William Shakspere of Stratford. Ben Jonson presents a contrast to William Shakspere, in almost every respect, so striking as to awaken an irrepressible desire to compare the mass of proven facts adduced from authentic records. Being born in the city of London in the early part of 1574, he was ten years younger than Shakspere. He was the son of a clergyman. In spite of poverty he was educated at Westminster School, William Camden being his tutor, to whom Jonson refers as "Camden, most reverend "head, to whom I owe all that I am—in arts all that I owe." A recent writer on the subject of Jonson says, "No other of "Shakspere's contemporaries has left so "splendid and so enthusiastic an eulogy

"of the master." In this statement all must concur, for Jonson is the only writer of eminence among Shakspere's cotemporaries, who has left words of praise or censure, or have taken any notice, either of Shakspere, or of the works which bear his name; notwithstanding, it was the custom among literary men of the day to belaud their friends in verse or prose, Shakspere in his lifetime was honored with no mark of Ben Jonson's admiration. Not a single line of commendatory verse was addressed to Shakspere by Jonson, although this promiscuous panegyrist was, with characteristic extravagance, so indiscriminate in sympathy or patronage. What shrimp was there among hack writers who could not gain a panegyric from his generous tongue?

For five and twenty years Shakspere and Jonson jostled in London streets, yet there was no sign or word of recognition as they passed each other by. Writers on the subject of Jonson and Shakspere say

that we have abundant tradition of their close friendship. There are no credible traditions. The manufactured traditions, so conspicuous in books called, "A Life of William Shakspere," are the dreams of fancy, fraud and fiction, used to fill the lacuna, or gap, in the life of the Stratford man.

The proven facts of William Shakspere's life are facts unassociated with authorcraft—facts that prove the isolation and divorcement of player and poet. The proven facts of Ben Jonson's life are facts interlacing man and poet. Almost every incident in his life reveals his personal affection, or bitter dislike, for his fellow craftsmen, always ready for a quarrel, arrogant, vain, boastful and vulgar. There is much truth in Dekker's charge, "'Tis thy fashion to flirt ink in "every man's face and then crawl into "his bosom." He had many quarrels with Marston, beat him, and wrote his "Poetaster on him." He was federated in a comedy "(Eastward Ho)" with

Chapman, and was sent to prison for libeling the Scottish nobility. Ben Jonson's personality and literary work are inseparable. Drunk or sober, few have served learning with so much pertinacity, and fewer still, have so successfully challenged admiration even from literary rivals, with whom at times he was most bitterly hostile, and at other times, indisputably open-handed and jovial.

Ben Jonson had a literary environment always for there is perfect interlacement of man and craft. He became one of the most prolific writers of his age occupying among the men of his day a position of literary supremacy. "In the forty years of his literary career he col-"lected a library so extensive that Gif-"ford doubted whether any library in "England was so rich in scarce and valu-"able books." From the pages of Isaac De Israeli we read, "No poet has left be-"hind him so many testimonials of per-"sonal fondness by inscriptions and "addresses in the copies of his works

"which he presented to his friends." But of all these, as strange as it must seem to the votaries of Shakspere, not a single copy of Jonson's works is brought forward to bear witness of his personal regard and admiration for Shakspere, and we may add that there is no testimonial by Shakspere of his regard and personal fondness for Ben Jonson, although many of the literary antiquaries have unearthed in their researches facts or new discoveries, which they have brought forward as new particulars of the life of William Shakspere. These, if not incompatible with authorship, are surely divorcing Shakspere, the actor, from Shakespeare, the author poet. They but deepen the mystery that surrounds the personality of the author of the immortal plays—"The shadow of a mighty name." At the same time they disclose the true character of Shakspere the actor, moneylender, land-owner and litigant, which is affirmative of John Bright's opinion that "any man who believes that William

"Shakspere of Stratford wrote 'Hamlet'
"or 'Lear' is a fool."

The student reader will perceive that Jonson's verse does not agree with his prose, and that his "Ode to Shakes-
"peare," which Dryden called "an inso-
"lent, sparing, and invidious, panegyric," was not the final word of comment which is contained in Ben Jonson's "Discover-
"ies"—a prose reference in disparage-ment of Shakespeare, the writer, while laudatory of the man whom he may have believed was identifiable with the play-wright. We believe he was mistaken in so believing. Ben Jonson was vulnerable most in his character as a witness. The reader must therefore be indulgent if we make some remarks upon the credibility and competency of this witness. The elder writers on the subject of Jonson and Shakespeare before Gifford's time (1757-1826) were always harping on Ben Jonson's jealousy and envy of Shakes-peare. Since Gifford's day the antiquary has been abroad in the land without hav-

ing discovered anything of a literary life of Shakespeare. As if by general consent, all recent writers on the subject regard Jonson's attestation, or his metrical tribute, to the "memory of my beloved author, Mr. William Shakespeare, "an es- "sential element in Shakespeare's biog- "raphy as the title deed of authorship." Having made him their star witness, we shall hear no more of Jonson's jealousy and envy of Shakespeare.

A final consideration will show how little Ben Jonson is to be relied on "as at- "testing the responsibility of the Strat- "ford player for the works which are "associated with his name." There is not a word or sentence in all Jonson's writings which bear witness to Shakspere as a writer of plays or poems anterior to the Stratford player's death, as all reference to Shakespeare in Jonson's verse and prose are posterior to this event. They refute each other and discredit the writer. "Conversations of Ben Jonson "with William Drummond" are of great

literary and historical value and are important too, as bearing on Ben Jonson's competency and credibleness as a witness. The Drummond notes were first printed by Mr. David Lang, who discovered them among the manuscripts of Sir Robert Sibbald, a well known antiquarian. "Conversations," as we have it on the evidence of Drummond, is in accord with almost every contemporary reference to Jonson and internally they agree with Ben Jonson's own "Discover-"ies." There should be no controversy in regard to the justice of the Scottish poet's criticism. From the notes recorded by Drummond we learn, "He "(Ben Jonson) is a great lover and "praiser of himself, a contemner and "scorner of others, especially after drink "which is one of the elements in which he "liveth." The conversations recorded by Drummond took place when Jonson visited him at Hawthornden in 1618-19 and disclose the fact that "Rare Ben" was a vulgar, boastful, tipsy backbiter, who

black-guarded many of his fellow craftsmen. The last circumstance recorded of Ben Jonson is where reference is made to his display of self-worship at the expense of others. In a letter dated from Westminster April 5, 1636, James Howell describes a Solem supper given by Jonson at which he and Thomas Carew were present, when Ben seems to have drenched himself with his favorite canary wine. Howell writes,

"I was invited yesternight to a Solem "supper by B. J. whom you deeply re-"member. There was good company, ex-"cellent cheer, choice wines, and jovial "welcome. One thing intervened which "almost spoiled the relish of the rest. "Ben began to engross all the discourse "to vapour extremely of himself and by "vilifying others to magnify his own "muse. Thomas Carew buzzed me in the "ear that Ben had barreled up a great "deal of knowledge, yet seems he had not "read the 'Ethiques' which, among other "precepts of morality, forbid self com-

"mendation. But for my part I am con-
"tent to dispense with this Roman infirm-
"ity of B's now that time has snowed
"upon his pricranium."

The reader is not unmindful that the language of Ben Jonson is sometimes grossly opprobrious, sometimes basely adulatory, while his laudatory verses on Shakespeare, Silvester, Beaumont and other cotemporary writers, are in striking contrast by the discrepancy of testimony disclosed by his prose works and conversations. In the memorial verses Jonson tells us Shakespeare stood alone—"Alone for the comparison of all
"that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
"sent forth or since did from their ashes
"come." The strictest scrutiny, however, into the life and works of Ben Jonson fails to denote his actual acquaintance with the works of the greatest genius of our world. What became of his enthusiastic eulogy of Shakespeare, when "from my house in the Black-Friars this "11th day of February, 1607" Ben Jon-

son writes his dedication—"Volpone" to "The Two Famous Universities," which should have disclosed his close friendship with, and admiration for, William Shakespeare, for the great dramatist was then in the zenith of his power. The dedication of "Volpone" was written nine years before the death of William Shakspere, the player, when Jonson declared "I shall raise the despised head of poetry "again and stripping her out of those "rotten and base rags wherewith the "times have adulterated her form."

It should be remembered, that at the time of this sweeping condemnation of what he terms dramatic or stage-poetry, thirty-one of the thirty-six of the immortal Shakespearean plays were then written. All of the very greatest—"Hamlet," "Lear," "Macbeth"—were, in Ben Jonson's estimation in 1607, "rotten and "base rags." While in 1623 in the "Memorial Verses" he tells us that their reputed author was the "soul of the age." "It is a legal maxim that a witness

"who swears for both sides swears for "neither, and a rule of common law no "less than common sense that his evi- "dence must be ruled out." Ben Jonson's egotism would, of course, preclude a just judgment of the work of his fellow craftsman. He felt that his own writings were immeasurably superior. Did he ever read the so-called Shakspere plays before he wrote the "Ode to the Memory "of my Beloved The Author, Mr. Wil- "liam Shakespeare, and What He Hath "Left Us" for the syndicate of printers? For the affirmative of the proposition there is not the faintest presumption of probable evidence. Jonson often became the generous panegyrist of poets whose writings in all probability he never had read. He took pleasure in commending in verse the works of men not worthy of his notice, and in lauding and patronizing juvenile mediocrity and poeticules of the gutter-snipe order. In his prefatory remarks to the reader in "Sejanus" there is the same display of excess

of commendation. Ben Jonson writes, "Lastly I would inform you that this "book in all numbers is not the same "with that which was acted on the public "stage wherein a second pen had good "share, in place of which I have rather "chosen to put weaker and no doubt less "pleasing of my own than to defraud so "happy a genius of his right by my loath-"ed usurpations."

According to Dryden, Ben Jonson's compliments were left-handed. Nevertheless, the words "so happy a genius" have directed the thoughts of commentators to Shakespeare. Mr. Nicholson, however, has shown that the person alluded to is not Shakespeare, but a very inferior poet, Samuel Sheppard, who more than forty years later claimed for himself the honor of having collaborated in "Sejanus" with Ben Jonson. Compliments bestowed on inferior men of the elder time are in later times the reprisal of Shakespearean buccaneers; while many of Jonson's versified panegyrics on cotemporary poets

were retrieved by his withering contempt for many of them, orally expressed, or contained in his prose works, Shakespeare being included among these. Still, at the Apollo room of the Devil Tavern were numbered the most distinguished men of the day outside of literary circles, as well as within, who sought his fellowship and would gladly have sealed themselves of the tribe of Ben. Clarendon tells us that " his conversations were "very good and with men of most note."

The following is, in part, from the notes recorded by William Drummond, Laird of Hawthornden.

"Conversations of Ben Jonson. His "censure of the English poets was this: "That Sidney did not keep a decorum in "making every one speak as well as him- "self. Spencer's stanzas pleased him not "nor his matter.

"Samuel Daniel was a good honest "man, had no children, but no poet, and "was jealous of him; that Michael Dray- "ton's long verses pleased him not—

"Drayton feared him and he esteemed not "of him; that Donne's 'Anniversary' was "profane and full of blasphemies . . . . . "that Donne, for not keeping of accent "deserved hanging; that Shakespeare "wanted art; that Day, Dekker and Min- "shew were all rogues; that Abram Fran- "cis, in his English hexameters, was a "fool; that next to himself only Fletcher "and Chapman could make a masque.

"He esteemeth John Donne the first "poet in the world in some things; that "Donne, himself, for not being under- "stood would perish.

"Sir Henry Wotton's verses of a "'Happy Life' he hath by heart, and a "piece of Chapman's translation of the "thirteen of the 'Iliads,' which he think- "eth well done. That Francis Beaumont "loved too much himself and his own "verse.

"He had many quarrels with Marston; "that Markham was not of the number of "the faithful, and but a base fellow; that "such were Day and Middleton; that

"Chapman and Fletcher were loved of "him; that Spencer died for lack of bread "in King street; that the King said Sir "P. Sidney was no poet. Neither did he "see any verses in England to the Scul- "lers, meaning that John Taylor was the "best poet in England: that Shakespeare "in a play brought in a number of men "saying they had suffered shipwreck in "Bohemia where there is no sea near by "some 100 miles.

"Sundry times he (Jonson) hath de- "voured his books, sold them all for neces- "sity; that he hath consumed a whole "night in lying looking at his great toe, "about which he hath seen Carthagenians "and the Romans fighting; that the half "of his comedies were not in print; he "said to Prince Charles, of Inigo Jones, "that when he wanted words to express "the greatest villain in the world, he "would call him an 'Inigo,' Jones having "accused him for naming him, behind his "back, a fool, he denied it; but, says he, I "said he was an arrant knave, and I

"avouch it; of all his plays he never "gained 200 pounds; he dissuaded me "from poetry for that she had beggared "him when he might have been a rich "lawyer, physician, or merchant; that "piece of the 'Pucelle of the Court' was "stolen out of his pocket by a gentleman "who drank him drowsy."

These occasional infractions of sobriety by Ben Jonson when he conversed with Drummond at Hawthornden in 1618-19 became habitual with him long before James Howell's invitation to a Solem supper by B. J. 1636.

Day, Middleton, Dekker and Sir Walter Raleigh could have instituted a civil suit against Ben Jonson for defamation of character, because of the defamatory words in conversation with William Drummond of Hawthornden, had the notes recorded by Drummond been published in the lifetime of the defamed. However, they had come to regard him, doubtless, as a notorious slanderer who would as soon falsify as verify, and was

not to be believed in unsworn testimony about his fellowmen or as a credible witness as to any matter—one whose testimony was none too good under every sanction possible to give it. This is the writer who gave genesis to the Stratford myth. The matter-of-fact to be accentuated is that the contemporaries of the writer of the immortal plays did not know positively who wrote them; we do not know positively who wrote them; and our latest posterity, when Holy Trinity's monuments, turrets, and towers shall have crumbled and commingled with the shrined dust of William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon, may not know positively who wrote them.

In conclusion, it has not been our design to point out, or suggest, who, in fact, wrote the poems and plays, but rather to show that the man of Stratford was by education, temperament, character, reputation, opportunity and calling, wholly unequal to so transcendent a task, and that the authorship assumed in favor of

this man, rests upon no tangible proof, but to the contrary upon strained and far-fetched conjecture, merely.

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